SPECIAL

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ATARI FORCE™

ALL-NEW ACTION WITH COMICS' GREATEST SCIENCE FICTION TEAM!

Meanwhile...

BY KAREN BERGER

I'm sure you people won't believe it. In fact, I find it very hard to believe, myself, and I'm the one with the weird experience. But I'll let you judge for yourselves. The story goes like this:

One gloomy, rainy Monday morning in early November, a clock radio alarm goes off. I rub my sleepy eyes, curse the cheerful disc jockeys, and put my pillow over my head. Sleep, sleep, I just want to sleep! Please, let it be the wrong time, please! It can't be Monday morning already! The next thing I know it's not. I open my eyes, and it's twelve noon, and the weatherman's saying it's a beautiful sunny Tuesday, one of the ten best days of the year. I must be dreaming. I have to be. After all, every morning I go through the same routine. My radio goes off, I curse the deejays (boy, if they only knew what people said about them in the morning!), fall back to sleep for an hour, have bizarre dreams, wake up late, and then rush like a lunatic to work. But this time, it's different. This is no dream. I'm wide awake. Really. And it's Tuesday. Whatever birds exist in N.Y.C. are chirping, the garbage trucks are droning, and my upstairs neighbor is vacuuming. "Well, maybe it's me," I say to myself. "You know how wrapped up you get in work that you sometimes forget what day it is. Yeah, that's true. Maybe I'm not dreaming, and besides, it's 12:00, there's still time to get to work before Len and Andy."

I take a quick shower, throw on some clothes, and dash out the door. I just catch the M5 bus on my corner, get a seat (now I **know** *I'm dreaming), and twelve traffic-free minutes later, I debark right in front of 666 Fifth Avenue, the home of the beast himself. I head upstairs. No one says anything unusual to me, so, playing dumb, I go to my office, and figure I'll take the day as it comes.*

Then the strangest thing happens. Art Director, Richard Bruning, stops by and says, "Great **Meanwhile...** *column, Karen. The copy just came back from the typesetter, so all we need is your signature at the bottom." "Huh,* **Meanwhile...** *column?" I say. "But I haven't written that yet. I've been driving myself crazy trying to think of a fascinating subject, and I've been at a loss." But Richard is gone, and this column is on my desk. It reads like this:*

Hi, there, everyone. Karen Berger, here, next in line in this monthly **Meanwhile...** merry-go-round. For those of you who don't know who I am (and, if not, you should be ashamed of yourselves), I'll fill you in.

I've been working at **DC Comics** for just over six years now, and for the past three years I've been a full-time editor, currently producing such titles as **LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES, SWAMP THING, AMETHYST, LEGIONNAIRES THREE** mini-series, **TALES OF THE LEGION**, the all-new **WONDER WOMAN**, and a couple of hot titles in development. Before I entered into the comforting madness that a creative job offers, I was part of another kind of insanity, in a position called Editorial Coordinator. For two and a half years I supervised the deadlines on all of **DC's** books, baby-sat editors and other artistic beings, juggled schedules and free-lancers (you should've seen my act, and that was before my obsessive exercise days), and generally ran around like a crazy person. Back at the very beginning, when I was but a wee lass right out of Brooklyn College, I was Paul Levitz's assistant. Little did I know then, that someday I'd be editing a book that he writes: the **LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES.**

Just a mere three months ago, the writer of Legion lore himself regaled you all with tales of mystery surrounding Sensor Girl's identity. But that enigma is just one of many interesting developments happening in the **LEGION.** Even as we speak, a new Fatal Five is being formed, with the Emerald Empress ('natch) at the helm, the Persuader, her axe-wielding right-hand man, by her side, plus three malevolent new members. They'll be making life quite hard for the Legionnaires, and if that's not enough, next month's "Dead End" will be the spawning ground for the Legion's annual multipart suspenseful epic. This year's saga features the return of Universo, one of the galaxy's foremost criminal minds, who's already been sowing the seeds of his destructive plan throughout recent stories. (I'm not telling where, of course!)

Everyone still following me? Good, 'cause more Legion excitement abounds in **LEGIONNAIRES THREE**, a four-part mini-series (the second issue's on sale now), and for those of you who aren't regular readers of the universe's most fantastic futuristic family, you can pick up **TALES OF THE LEGION**, the monthly title that reprints stories originally appearing in last year's Deluxe book. And lest I forget, we also have this summer's exciting Annual, featuring the one and only Darkseid, in the much-anticipated sequel to the "The Curse."

That just about wraps up my segment in this rotating **Meanwhile...** soapbox spot. Thanks for listening, people, and all together, now ... "**Long Live the Legion!**"

And that's what the column says. Well, to be honest, I really don't remember writing it. Maybe someone who looks like me did me a favor (we're all supposed to have doubles, right?) and submitted the column to Richard when I wasn't looking. Or ... maybe I have a fairy godmother, or maybe this isn't a dream (I never liked Mondays anyway), or if this is a dream, be nice to me, let me think that the **Meanwhile...** *column is done, and don't wake me up!*

Karen

DC CHECKLIST DELUXE

☐ ***VIGILANTE #28***
Introducing...the new Vigilante! Who is he and why has he taken on the costume? And how does Adrian Chase react? Painted cover by Bill Sienkiewicz.

☐ ***OUTSIDERS #6***
A new villain invades Outsiders HQ and the team learns: nothing can stop the Duke of Oil! Also: "Outsiders at the Bat!" something to see to be believed!

☐ ***OMEGA MEN #37***
On Kuraq, a plague of two-dimensional killers threatens Tigorr, Harpis, and Oho-Besh! Plus a "Vega" tale. Painted cover by Shawn McManus.

☐ ***LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES #21***
A new Fatal Five in the making and the mystery behind Sensor Girl mounts! Plus, a Quislet solo story—oh, boy!

☐ ***SHADOW OF THE BATMAN #5***
Batman takes his grief out on Gotham's criminals and then must take control in time for the new Clayface! Final issue with a new wraparound cover by Marshall Rogers.

☐ ***INFINITY, INC. #25***
As the Infinitors debate adding new members, Carcharo strikes! 28 pages of nonstop action by Roy Thomas & Todd McFarlane.

☐ ***NEW TEEN TITANS #19***
Nightwing refuses to follow the other Titans and goes off on his own. Is this the end of the New Teen Titans? Painted cover by George Pérez.

☐ ***DC CHALLENGE #6***
It's Albert Einstein to the rescue throughout time—guest starring Silent Knight, Rip Hunter, Batman, Adam Strange, Deadman & everyone else!

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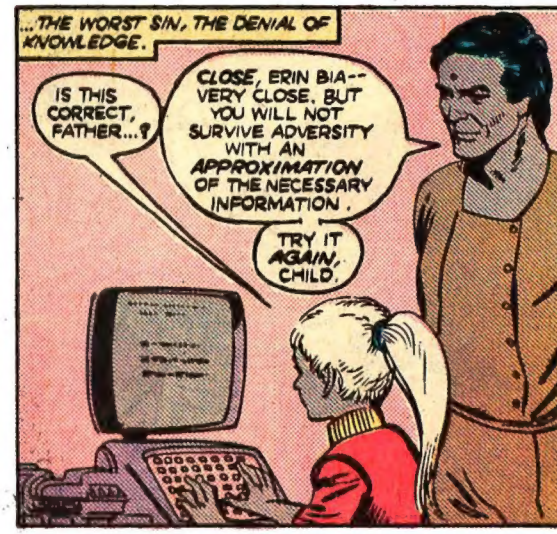
WE ARE ALL OF US BORN EQUAL:
EQUAL IN OUR HELPLESSNESS AND WEAKNESS. SOME MAY NEVER LOSE THESE DEFICIENCIES. OTHERS WILL ONE DAY LOOK BACK AND NOT BELIEVE THEY EVER POSSESSED THEM. STILL OTHERS ARE POSSESSED OF UNIQUE GIFTS THAT ONLY TIME WILL REVEAL.
DART, BORN TO LI-SAN O'ROURKE AND MOHANDAS SINGH OF NEW EARTH, BEGAN LIFE IN DEFENSELESSNESS--

--BUT WAS SOON TAUGHT THAT THE GREATEST WEAKNESS WAS WEAKNESS ITSELF...
OBSERVE, ERIN BIA! ONE STRIKES SWIFTLY, WITHOUT MERCY--YOUR FOES WILL SHOW NONE FOR YOU. NOW YOU TRY IT, LITTLE ONE.
YES, MOTHER.


...THE WORST SIN, THE DENIAL OF KNOWLEDGE.
IS THIS CORRECT, FATHER...?
CLOSE, ERIN BIA--VERY CLOSE. BUT YOU WILL NOT SURVIVE ADVERSITY WITH AN APPROXIMATION OF THE NECESSARY INFORMATION.
TRY IT AGAIN, CHILD.

THE MILITARY ACADEMY OF NEW EARTH, IN DART'S SIXTEENTH YEAR:
NO, GIRLS--THAT'S NOT IT! WE'RE GOING TO DO THE DRILL AGAIN... AND AGAIN--UNTIL YOU'VE ALL GOT IT RIGHT!
DARN THAT CLUMSY DALIA--

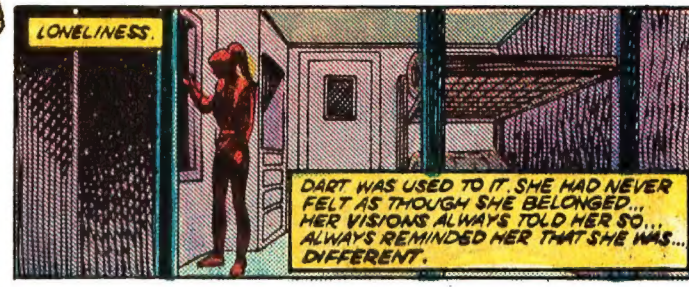
--IT'S ALL HER STUPID FAULT. SHE CAN'T DO ANYTHING RIGHT!
MAKING US DRILL IN THE SUN ALL DAY! I'LL SHOW HER A THING OR T--

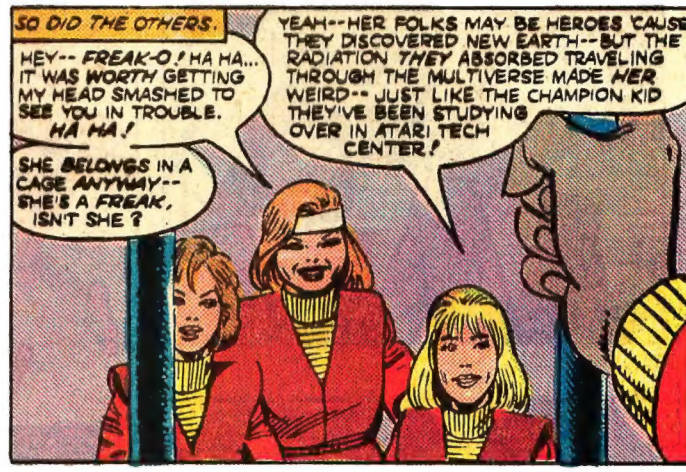
--OUTCHH!
KRAK!

NOT MUCH FUN GETTING HIT FROM BEHIND, IS IT, NANCY?
MAYBE YOU'LL WANT TO REMEMBER THAT FROM NOW ON.
OOOOOHH
SPLATT!

AGAIN, CADET O'ROURKE?
CAN'T EVEN GET THROUGH A SIMPLE ARMS DRILL WITHOUT MAKING TROUBLE? CARE TO EXPLAIN THIS STUPIDITY?
NO, MA'AM.
GUARDS... IT'S THE LOCK-UP FOR THIS ONE... TWO DAYS WITHOUT PRIVILEGES!

MAYBE A LITTLE DEPRIVATION'LL TEACH YOU DISCIPLINE.

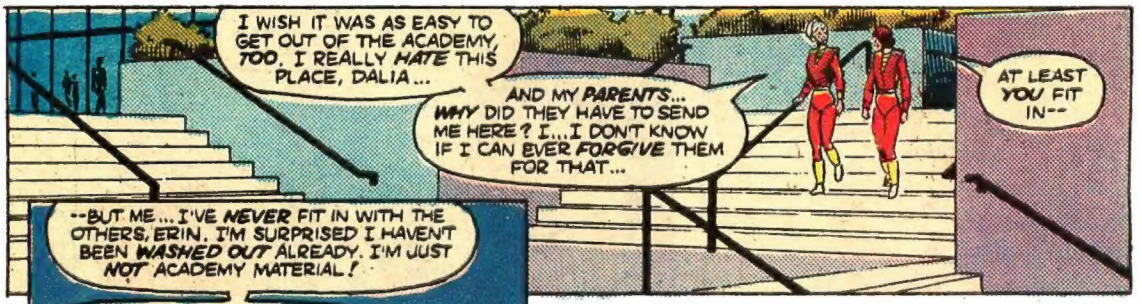

LONELINESS.
DART WAS USED TO IT. SHE HAD NEVER FELT AS THOUGH SHE BELONGED... HER VISIONS ALWAYS TOLD HER SO... ALWAYS REMINDED HER THAT SHE WAS... DIFFERENT.


SO DID THE OTHERS.
HEY-- FREAK-O! HA HA... IT WAS WORTH GETTING MY HEAD SMASHED TO SEE YOU IN TROUBLE. HA HA!
SHE BELONGS IN A CAGE ANYWAY-- SHE'S A FREAK, ISN'T SHE?
YEAH--HER FOLKS MAY BE HEROES 'CAUSE THEY DISCOVERED NEW EARTH--BUT THE RADIATION THEY ABSORBED TRAVELING THROUGH THE MULTIVERSE MADE HER WEIRD-- JUST LIKE THE CHAMPION KID THEY'VE BEEN STUDYING OVER IN ATARI TECH CENTER!

HA HA HA HA HA
WAKE UP, ERIN BIA--YOU'VE GOT COMPANY, GIRL!

DALIA!
...TO THE RESCUE! YOU REALLY SHOULDN'T HAVE DONE IT, DART. I COULD'VE HANDLED NANCY.

I KNOW, BUT WE'RE ROOMMATES, AREN'T WE? WE'RE SUPPOSED TO WATCH OUT FOR EACH OTHER.
WELL, I TOLD THE INSTRUCTOR WHY YOU PULLED THAT STUNT, AND SHE'S AGREED TO LET YOU OUT OF HERE.

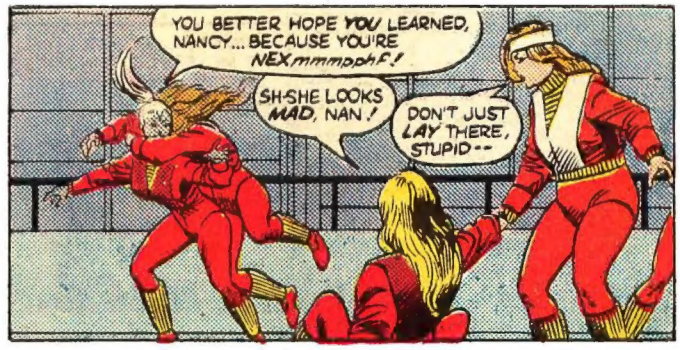

I WISH IT WAS AS EASY TO GET OUT OF THE ACADEMY, TOO. I REALLY HATE THIS PLACE, DALIA...
AND MY PARENTS... WHY DID THEY HAVE TO SEND ME HERE? I...I DON'T KNOW IF I CAN EVER FORGIVE THEM FOR THAT...
AT LEAST YOU FIT IN--

--BUT ME... I'VE NEVER FIT IN WITH THE OTHERS, ERIN. I'M SURPRISED I HAVENT BEEN WASHED OUT ALREADY. I'M JUST NOT ACADEMY MATERIAL!
YOU KNOW WHAT I'D REALLY LIKE TO DO? I'D LIKE TO JOIN UP WITH THOSE MERCENARIES WE READ ABOUT IN...
DALIA--! BEHIND YOU--!

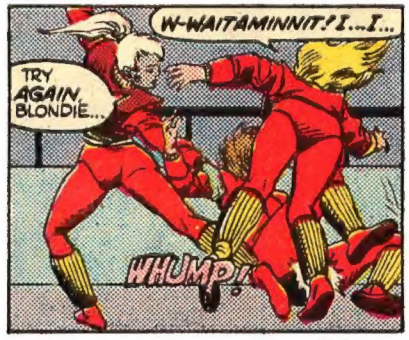
--WATCH OUT! IT'S... OOOFF!
YOU'RE GOING TO GET IT NOW, FREAK! YOU SHOULD'VE STAYED IN LOCK-UP--
--'CAUSE IT WOULD'VE BEEN A LOT EASIER THAN GETTING YOUR MUTANT BUTT KICKED! GET 'EM BOTH, CADETS!

ERIN! ARE YOU...?

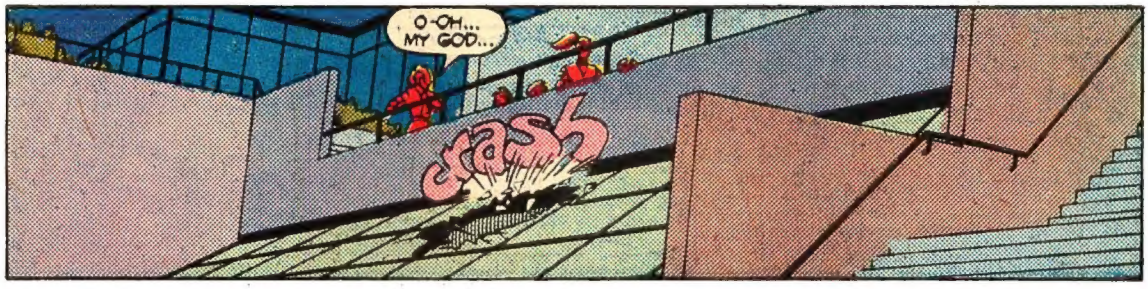
I'M FINE, DALIA.
DON'T WORRY ABOUT ME--CONCENTRATE ON THE FIGHT!
C'MON, C'MON! WE OUTNUMBER THEM! DIDN'T YOU GUYS LEARN ANYTHING IN HAND-TO-HAND?


YOU BETTER HOPE YOU LEARNED, NANCY... BECAUSE YOU'RE NEX,mmmpphf!
SH-SHE LOOKS MAD, NAN!
DON'T JUST LAY THERE, STUPID--

GET HER!
HEY!


W-WAITAMINNIT! I...I...
TRY AGAIN, BLONDIE...
WHUMP!

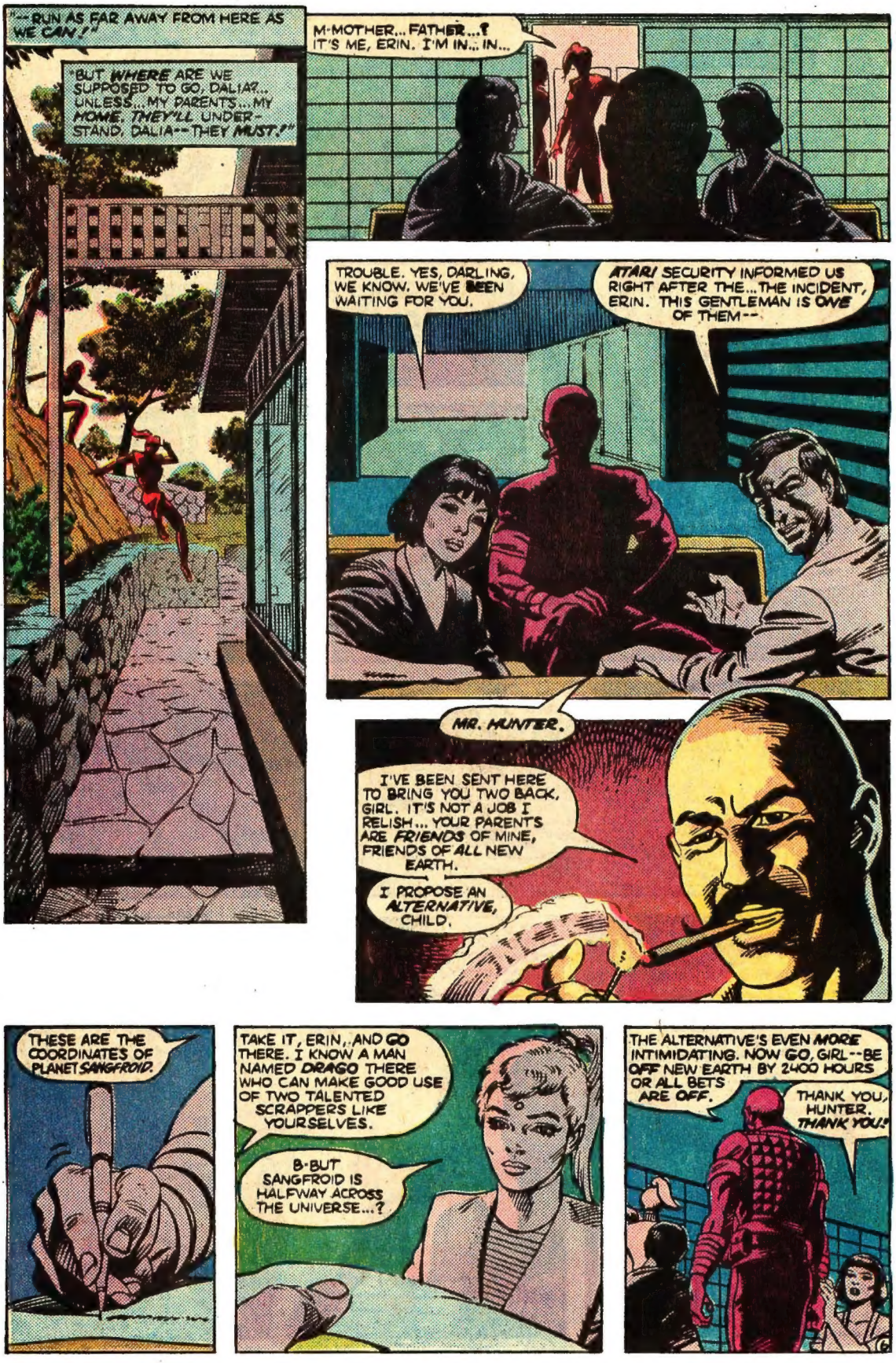
EEAHHH

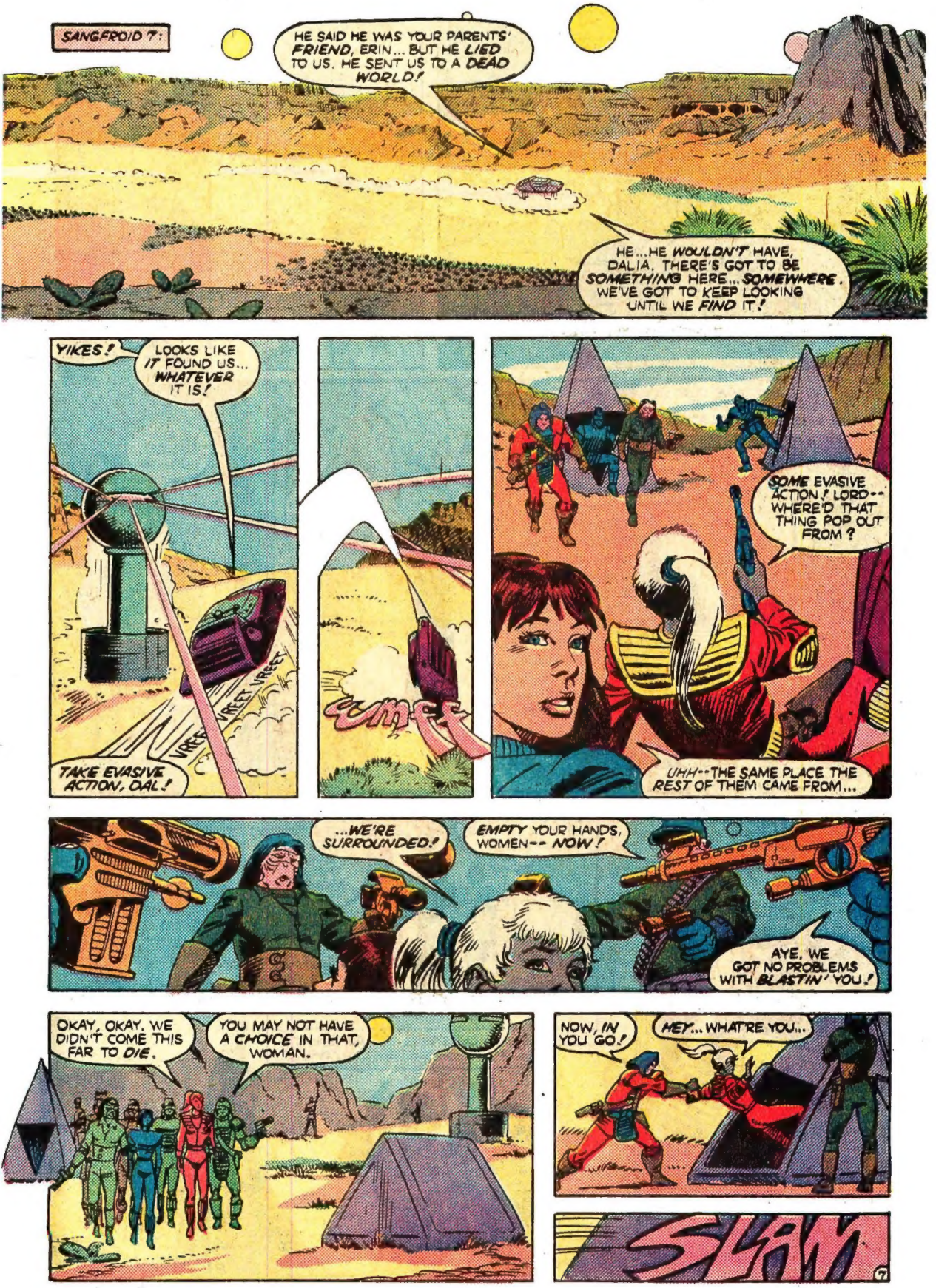

O-OH... MY GOD...
crash

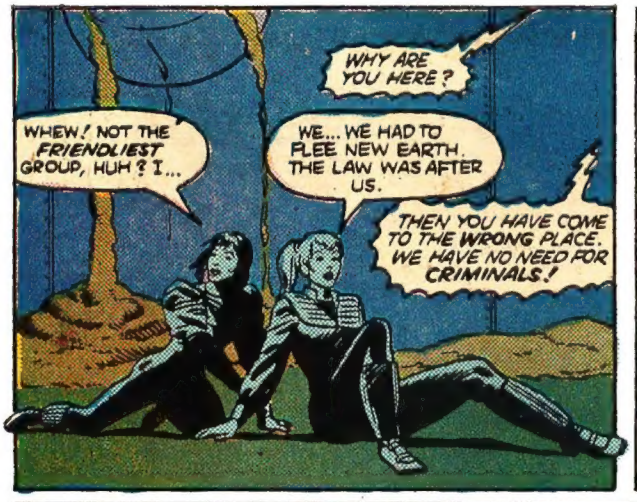
WHAT'S ALL THE NOISE? YOU... CADETS, STAND WHERE YOU ARE!
M.P.'S!

THEY... THEY ATTACKED US... THREW BETTY OFF THE WALKWAY! HELP ME! HELP!
B-BUT WE DIDN'T...

FORGET IT, ERIN! IT'S THEIR WORD AGAINST OURS... WE'VE GOT TO RUN--


"--RUN AS FAR AWAY FROM HERE AS WE CAN!"
"BUT WHERE ARE WE SUPPOSED TO GO, DALIA?... UNLESS... MY PARENTS... MY HOME. THEY'LL UNDERSTAND, DALIA--THEY MUST!"
M-MOTHER... FATHER...? IT'S ME, ERIN. I'M IN... IN...
TROUBLE. YES, DARLING, WE KNOW. WE'VE BEEN WAITING FOR YOU.
ATARI SECURITY INFORMED US RIGHT AFTER THE... THE INCIDENT, ERIN. THIS GENTLEMAN IS ONE OF THEM--
MR. HUNTER.
I'VE BEEN SENT HERE TO BRING YOU TWO BACK, GIRL. IT'S NOT A JOB I RELISH... YOUR PARENTS ARE FRIENDS OF MINE, FRIENDS OF ALL NEW EARTH.
I PROPOSE AN ALTERNATIVE, CHILD.
THESE ARE THE COORDINATES OF PLANET SANGFROID.
TAKE IT, ERIN, AND GO THERE. I KNOW A MAN NAMED DRAGO THERE WHO CAN MAKE GOOD USE OF TWO TALENTED SCRAPPERS LIKE YOURSELVES.
B-BUT SANGFROID IS HALFWAY ACROSS THE UNIVERSE...?
THE ALTERNATIVE'S EVEN MORE INTIMIDATING. NOW GO, GIRL--BE OFF NEW EARTH BY 2400 HOURS OR ALL BETS ARE OFF.
THANK YOU, HUNTER. THANK YOU!

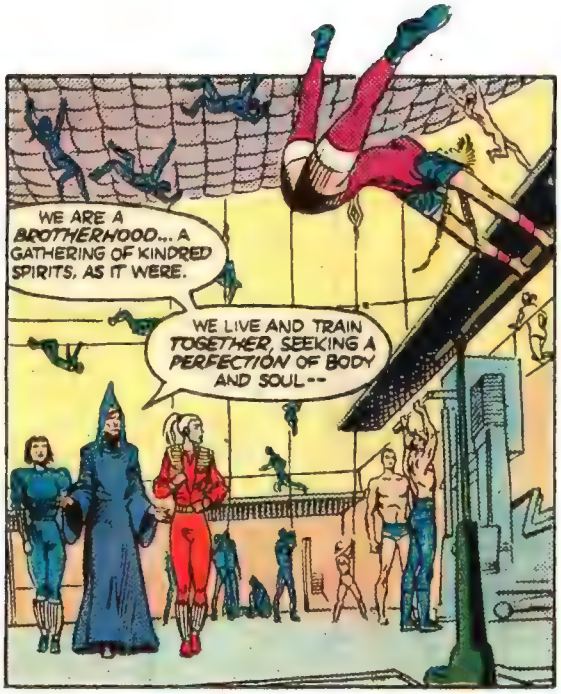

SANGFROID 7:
HE SAID HE WAS YOUR PARENTS' FRIEND, ERIN... BUT HE LIED TO US. HE SENT US TO A DEAD WORLD!
HE...HE WOULDN'T HAVE, DALIA. THERE'S GOT TO BE SOMETHING HERE... SOMEWHERE. WE'VE GOT TO KEEP LOOKING UNTIL WE FIND IT!
YIKES!
LOOKS LIKE IT FOUND US... WHATEVER IT IS!
VREET VREET VREET
TAKE EVASIVE ACTION, DAL!
SOME EVASIVE ACTION! LORD-- WHERE'D THAT THING POP OUT FROM?
UHH--THE SAME PLACE THE REST OF THEM CAME FROM...
...WE'RE SURROUNDED!
EMPTY YOUR HANDS, WOMEN-- NOW!
AYE, WE GOT NO PROBLEMS WITH BLASTIN' YOU!
OKAY, OKAY. WE DIDN'T COME THIS FAR TO DIE.
YOU MAY NOT HAVE A CHOICE IN THAT, WOMAN.
NOW, IN YOU GO!
HEY... WHAT'RE YOU...
SLAM

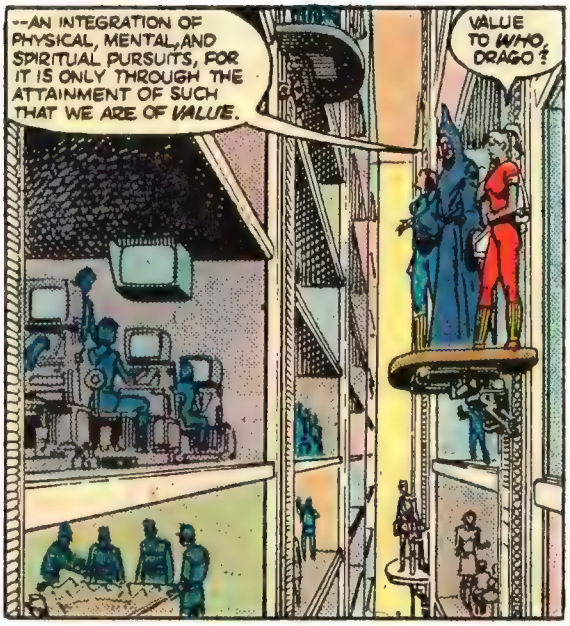

WHEW! NOT THE FRIENDLIEST GROUP, HUH? I...
WHY ARE YOU HERE?
WE... WE HAD TO FLEE NEW EARTH. THE LAW WAS AFTER US.
THEN YOU HAVE COME TO THE WRONG PLACE. WE HAVE NO NEED FOR CRIMINALS!

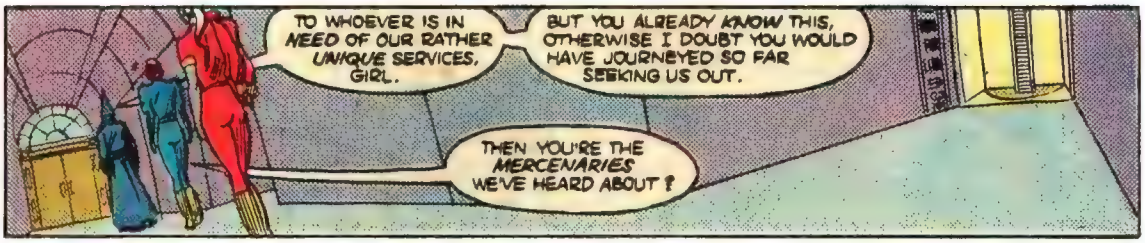
WE'RE NOT CRIMINALS--
--HUNTER SENT US!
HUNTER--?
YES.

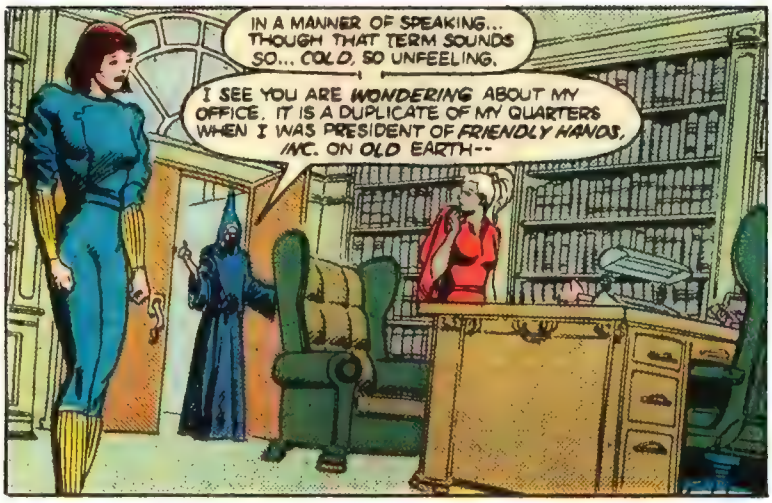
WHY DIDN'T YOU SAY SO IN THE FIRST PLACE?
ZOOOOOM!

OF THOSE OUTSIDE OUR COMMUNITY; HUNTER IS ONE WHO CAN BE TRUSTED.
COME, STRANGERS, YOU ARE WELCOME.
I AM DRAGO. JOIN US.
WHO... ARE YOU?
DRAGO! YOU'RE THE MAN HUNTER TOLD US ABOUT.
AND YOU MUST BOTH POSSESS ABILITIES HUNTER THOUGHT I MIGHT FIND USEFUL.
THIS PLACE IS AMAZING. WHAT IS IT? WHO ARE YOU PEOPLE?
SO MANY QUESTIONS, BUT PATIENCE. ALL WILL BE ANSWERED... IN TIME.
CLICK


WE ARE A BROTHERHOOD... A GATHERING OF KINDRED SPIRITS, AS IT WERE.
WE LIVE AND TRAIN TOGETHER, SEEKING A PERFECTION OF BODY AND SOUL--


--AN INTEGRATION OF PHYSICAL, MENTAL, AND SPIRITUAL PURSUITS, FOR IT IS ONLY THROUGH THE ATTAINMENT OF SUCH THAT WE ARE OF VALUE.
VALUE TO WHO, DRAGO?


TO WHOEVER IS IN NEED OF OUR RATHER UNIQUE SERVICES, GIRL.
BUT YOU ALREADY KNOW THIS, OTHERWISE I DOUBT YOU WOULD HAVE JOURNEYED SO FAR SEEKING US OUT.
THEN YOU'RE THE MERCENARIES WE'VE HEARD ABOUT?

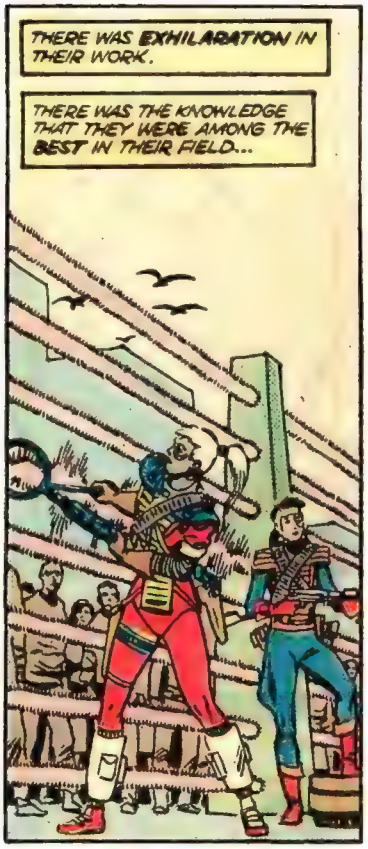

IN A MANNER OF SPEAKING... THOUGH THAT TERM SOUNDS SO... COLD, SO UNFEELING.
I SEE YOU ARE WONDERING ABOUT MY OFFICE. IT IS A DUPLICATE OF MY QUARTERS WHEN I WAS PRESIDENT OF FRIENDLY HANDS, INC. ON OLD EARTH--

--A COMPANY DEDICATED TO HELPING COUNTRIES IN NEED.
I HAVE CARRIED ON THAT WORK TO THIS DAY... ALBEIT ON A SLIGHTLY MORE UNIVERSAL SCALE. AND YOU, OF COURSE, WISH TO JOIN ME...?

WELLLL...
WHAT D'YOU THINK, ERIN?
I THINK-- WHERE DO WE SIGN, DRAGO?

WHY, ON THE DOTTED LINE, OF COURSE...
THUS WAS THE BARGAIN SEALED...
MERC FOR HIRE
MERC FOR HIRE

...AND TRAINING BEGUN THAT MADE THE HARSHEST OF THE ACADEMY'S TRIALS SEEM AS CHILD'S PLAY TO THE TWO FORMER CADETS.
COMBAT OF EVERY STYLE WAS DRILLED INTO THEM BY DAY.
STRATEGY AND PLANNING FOR EVERY CONCEIVABLE TERRAIN AND CONTINGENCY WAS TAUGHT THEM BY NIGHT.
AND ONLY ONCE THE GRUELING, EXHAUSTING REGIMEN OF KNOWLEDGE AND PHYSICAL PERFECTION WERE AS SECOND NATURE TO THEM DID THE FIGHTING BEGIN!


THERE WAS EXHILARATION IN THEIR WORK.
THERE WAS THE KNOWLEDGE THAT THEY WERE AMONG THE BEST IN THEIR FIELD...

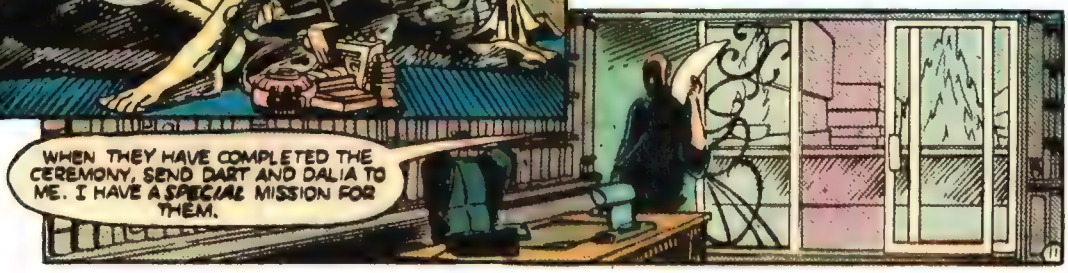
...THAT THEY WERE PART OF A FINE AND NOBLE FIGHTING FORCE...

...AND THAT ALWAYS, THEY FOUGHT ON THE SIDE OF RIGHT...
...DESTROYING THE TYRANNICAL AND DESPOTIC...
...LIBERATING THE OPPRESSED.
IT WAS A LIFE WORTH LIVING!

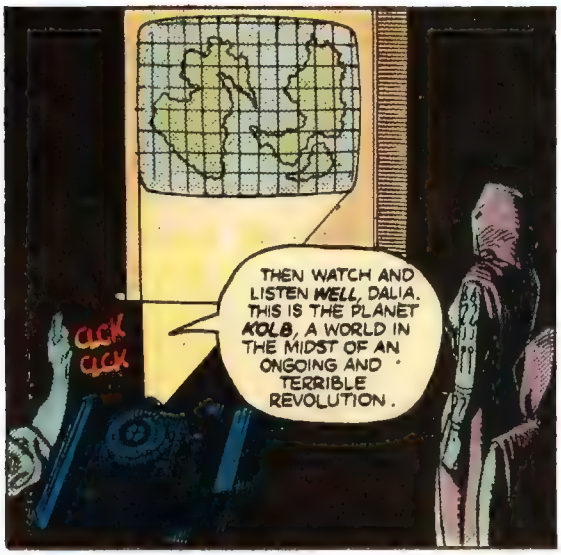
AND FOR EACH BATTLE WON, THERE CAME A REWARD BEYOND THE ACCOMPLISHMENT ITSELF.
THERE WAS THE CEREMONY... THE EXCHANGE OF LOVE AND RESPECT THAT EACH OF THE BROTHERHOOD HELD FOR ONE ANOTHER IN THE ADDITION OF A MARK...

...THE SIGN THAT DUTY AND OBLIGATION HAD BEEN FAITHFULLY FULFILLED.

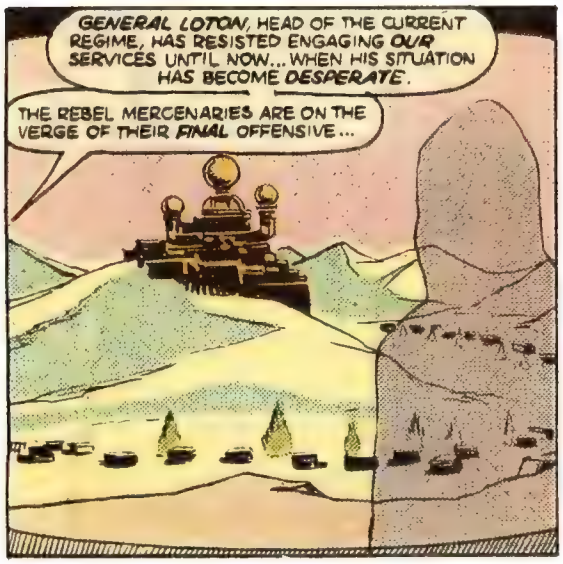
MMMM...

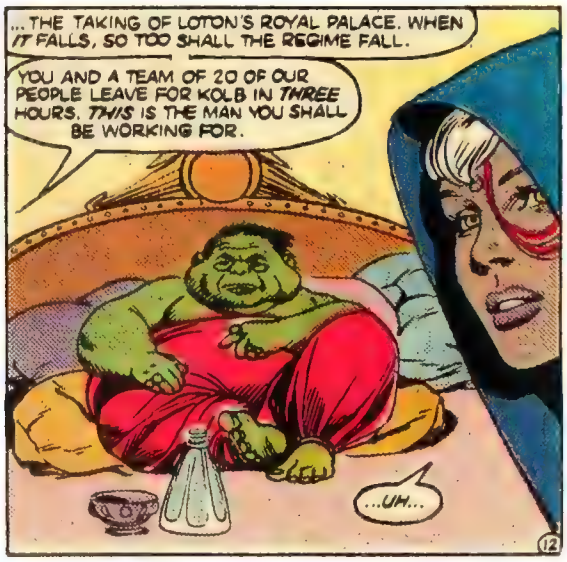

WHEN THEY HAVE COMPLETED THE CEREMONY, SEND DART AND DALIA TO ME. I HAVE A SPECIAL MISSION FOR THEM.

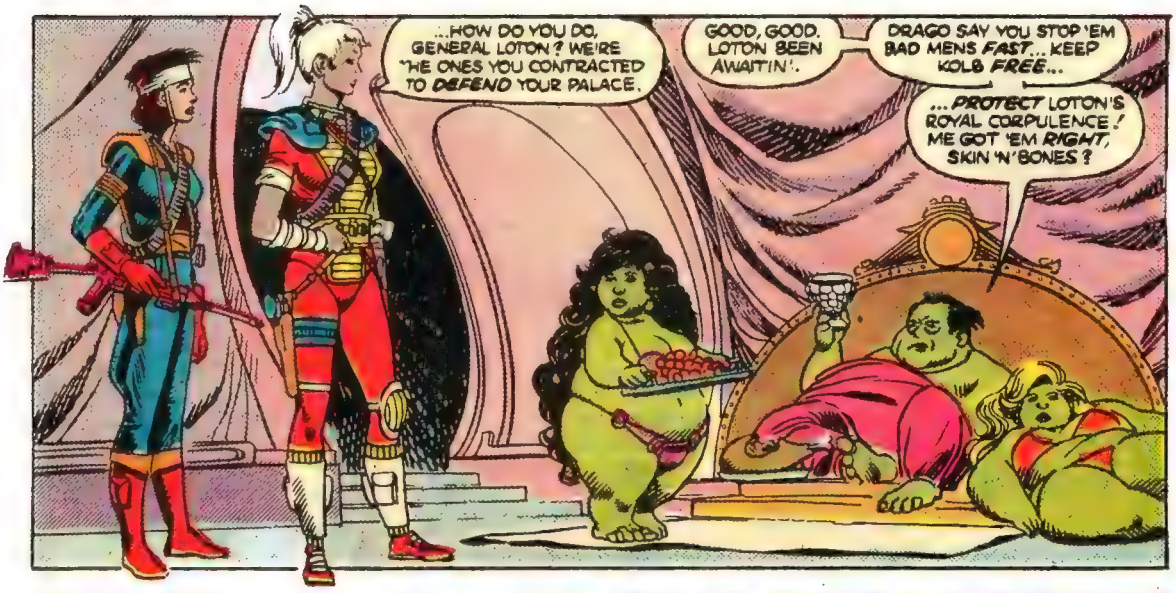
DART... DALIA... YOU HAVE BOTH SERVED ME WELL ON 78 ENGAGEMENTS, UNDER 16 COMMANDERS. YOU ARE NOW READY.
THE TIME HAS COME WHEN YOU SHALL BE PLACED IN CHARGE OF A MISSION.
WE ARE READY, DRAGO.


CLICK CLICK
THEN WATCH AND LISTEN WELL, DALIA. THIS IS THE PLANET KOLB, A WORLD IN THE MIDST OF AN ONGOING AND TERRIBLE REVOLUTION.

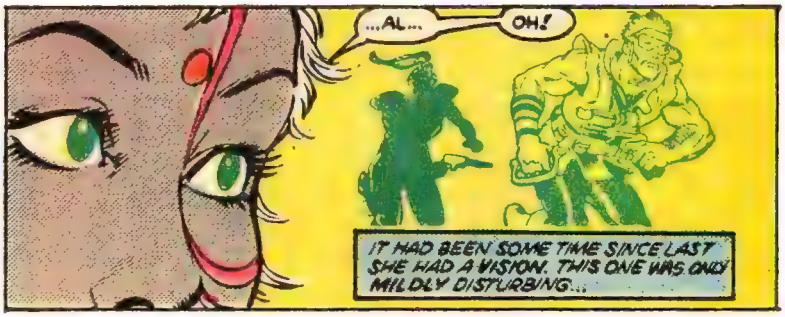
THE INHABITANTS OF KOLB ARE TOO BOGGED DOWN BY THEIR CORPOREAL FORMS TO ACTIVELY PARTICIPATE IN ANY PHYSICAL ACTIVITY... MUCH LESS ACTIVE COMBAT.
THE KOLBIAN REBELS HAVE CONTRACTED WITH AN OUTSIDE AGENCY TO DO BATTLE FOR THEM.


GENERAL LOTON, HEAD OF THE CURRENT REGIME, HAS RESISTED ENGAGING OUR SERVICES UNTIL NOW... WHEN HIS SITUATION HAS BECOME DESPERATE.
THE REBEL MERCENARIES ARE ON THE VERGE OF THEIR FINAL OFFENSIVE...


...THE TAKING OF LOTON'S ROYAL PALACE. WHEN IT FALLS, SO TOO SHALL THE REGIME FALL.
YOU AND A TEAM OF 20 OF OUR PEOPLE LEAVE FOR KOLB IN THREE HOURS. THIS IS THE MAN YOU SHALL BE WORKING FOR.
...UH...

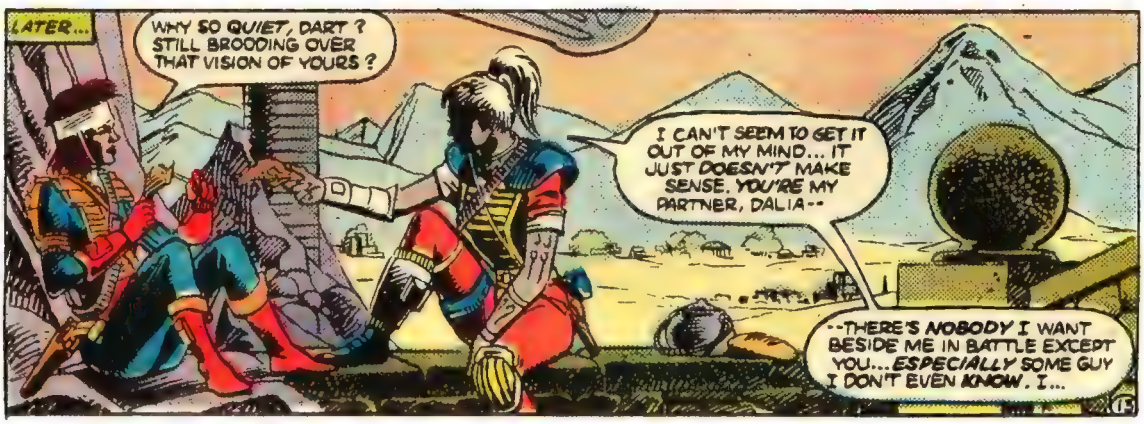

...HOW DO YOU DO, GENERAL LOTON? WE'RE THE ONES YOU CONTRACTED TO DEFEND YOUR PALACE.
GOOD, GOOD. LOTON BEEN AWAITIN'.
DRAGO SAY YOU STOP 'EM BAD MENS FAST... KEEP KOLB FREE...
...PROTECT LOTON'S ROYAL CORPULENCE! ME GOT 'EM RIGHT, SKIN 'N' BONES?

ER... THAT'S ABOUT THE GIST OF IT, GENER...

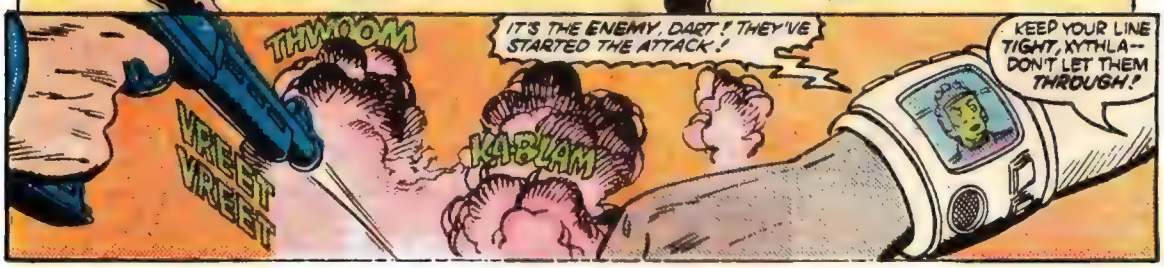

...AL...
OH!
IT HAD BEEN SOME TIME SINCE LAST SHE HAD A VISION. THIS ONE WAS ONLY MILDLY DISTURBING...

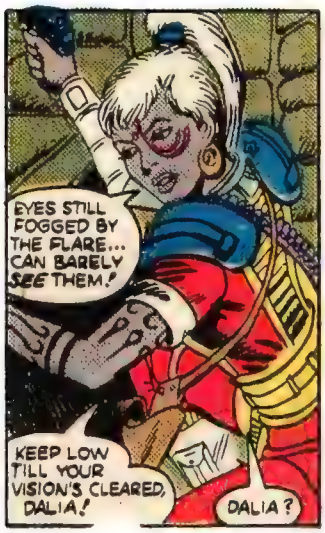
DART? YO--DART, YOU OKAY?
HUH--?! OH... SURE, DALIA. I... I'M FINE. LET'S GO.

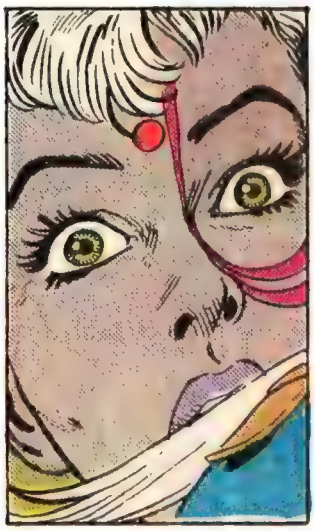
I DIDN'T WANT TO SAY ANYTHING IN FRONT OF LOTON, DAL... BUT I HAD A VISION BACK THERE...
...ME AND SOME GUY, FIGHTING SIDE-BY-SIDE...

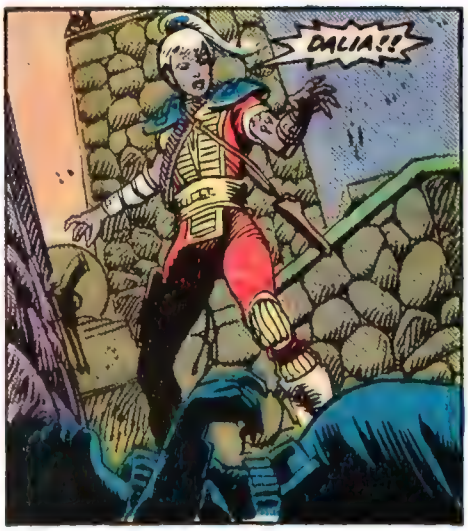

LATER...
WHY SO QUIET, DART? STILL BROODING OVER THAT VISION OF YOURS?
I CAN'T SEEM TO GET IT OUT OF MY MIND... IT JUST DOESN'T MAKE SENSE. YOU'RE MY PARTNER, DALIA--
--THERE'S NOBODY I WANT BESIDE ME IN BATTLE EXCEPT YOU... ESPECIALLY SOME GUY I DON'T EVEN KNOW. I...

YIKES! A SIGNAL FLARE...?!
DART TO FRONT... WHAT'S GOING ON? WHO FIRED THAT FLARE...?!


THWOOM
VREET VREET
KA-BLAM
IT'S THE ENEMY, DART! THEY'VE STARTED THE ATTACK!
KEEP YOUR LINE TIGHT, XYTHLA-- DON'T LET THEM THROUGH!


EYES STILL FOGGED BY THE FLARE... CAN BARELY SEE THEM!
KEEP LOW TILL YOUR VISION'S CLEARED, DALIA!
DALIA?




DALIA!!

OH, MY GOD... MY GOD... SOB!...
...d-dalia...

HOURS PASS. THE BATTLE ENDS...
GRRK!
NOW--!
YOU'RE DEAD, KILLER!
NO--WAIT! I DIDN'T--
DEAD!
please...
DE--!
?...
?...
NO!
RAK

LORD! HE WASN'T EVEN SHOWING A WEAPON AND I...I SHOT HIM!

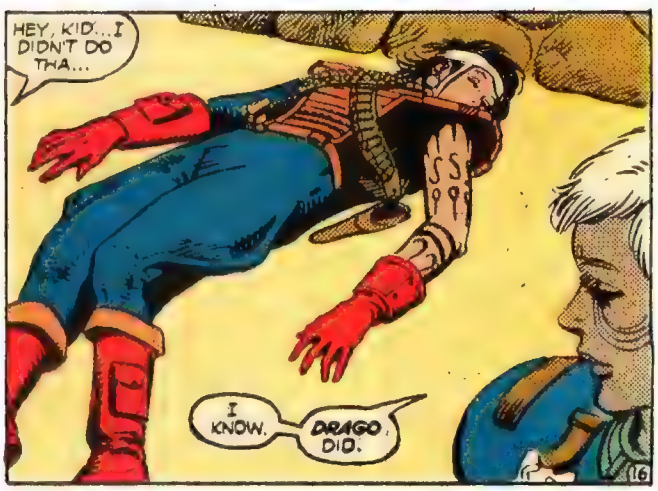
ARE YOU... ARE YOU OKAY? CAN YOU HEAR ME? D-DID I...
HEY, HEY! SLOW DOWN, LADY... AND, YEAH, YOU DID. AND IT HURTS LIKE HELL!

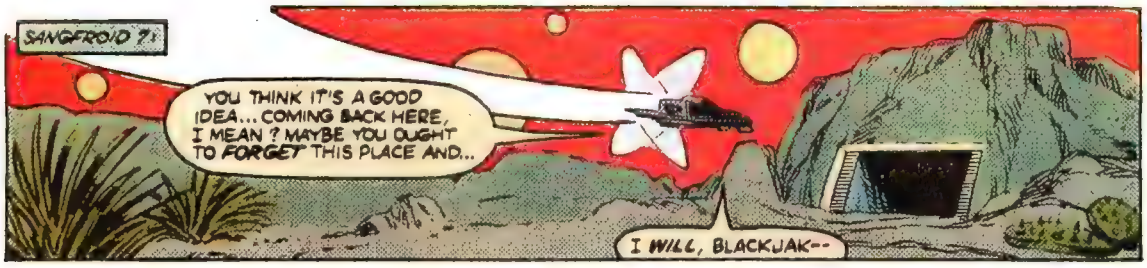
I'M SORRY. I...I MEAN, LET ME GET THE MEDI-KIT.
YEAH, IT'S THE LEAST YOU CAN DO. WANNA HURRY?

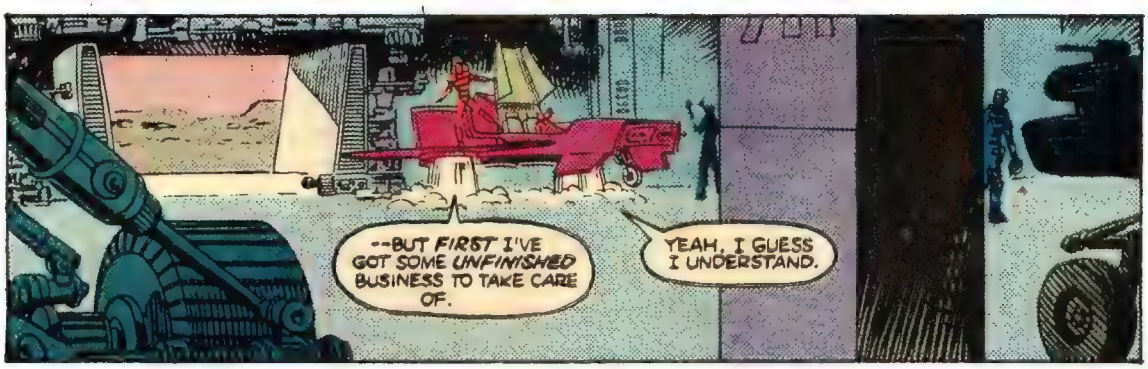
SIT STILL. THIS PAINKILLER'LL TAKE A FEW SECONDS TO WORK.
NO SWEAT. IT ONLY HURTS WHEN I BREATHE, ANYWAY. JEEZ-- LUCKY FOR ME YOU'RE NOT A BETTER SHOT.

I USUALLY AM. JUST KIND OF RATTLED, THAT'S ALL. WHO ARE YOU?
NAME'S FISK--MOSES FISK. MOST PEOPLE CALL ME BLACKJAK, THOUGH-- IT'S A CODENAME MY BOSS THOUGHT UP... DRAGO'S GOOD AT THAT--

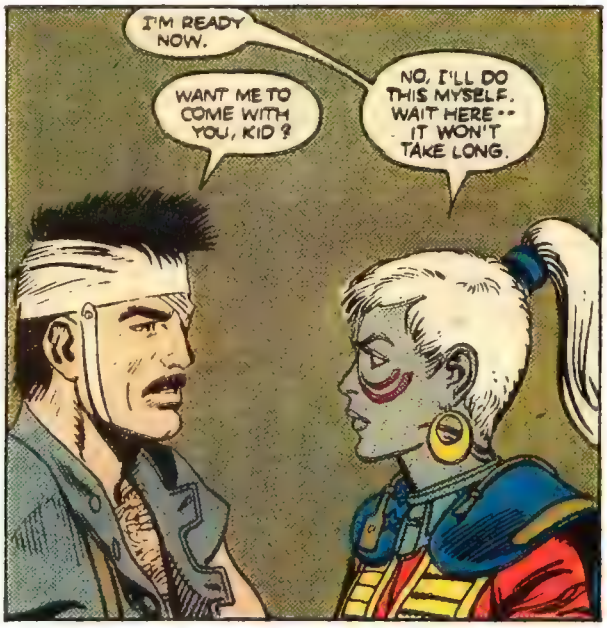
DRAGO--!
HE... HE SENT US TO FIGHT ON BOTH SIDES-- AGAINST EACH OTHER...?

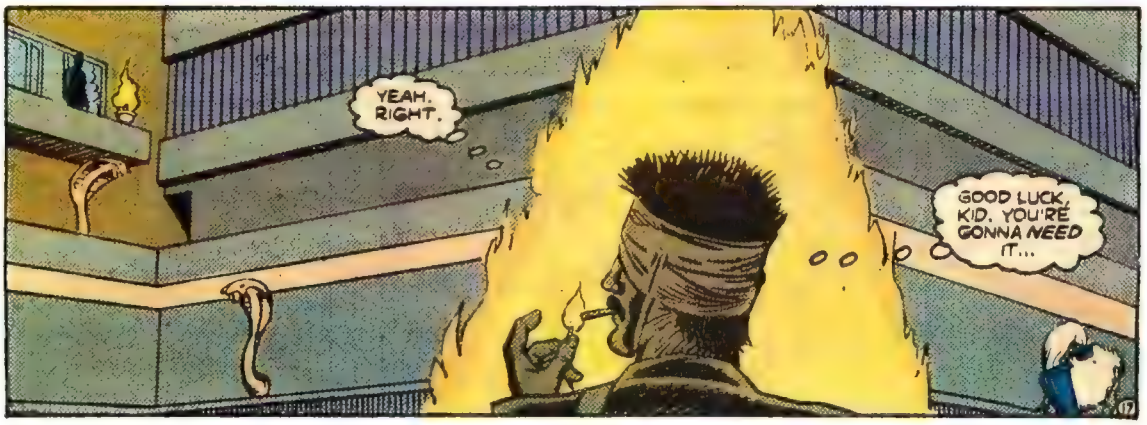

HEY, KID...I DIDN'T DO THA...
I KNOW.
DRAGO DID.

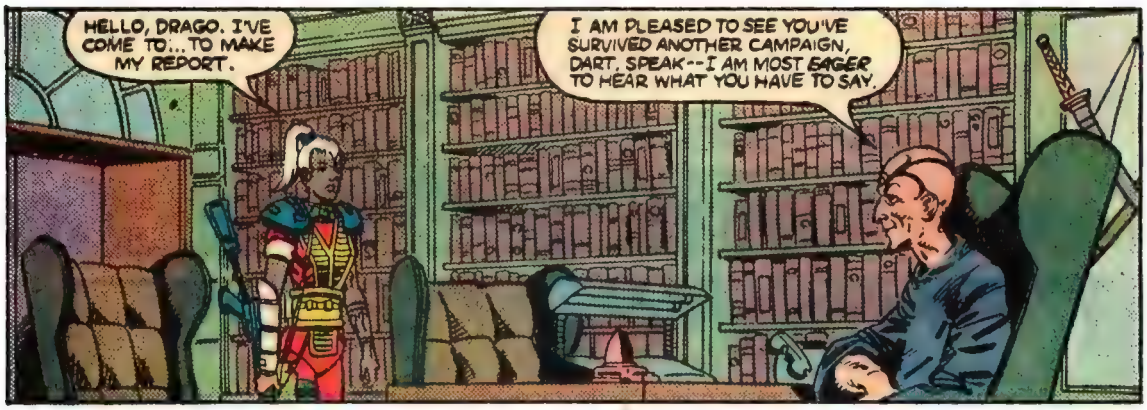

SANGFROID ?!
YOU THINK IT'S A GOOD IDEA... COMING BACK HERE, I MEAN ? MAYBE YOU OUGHT TO FORGET THIS PLACE AND...
I WILL, BLACKJAK--

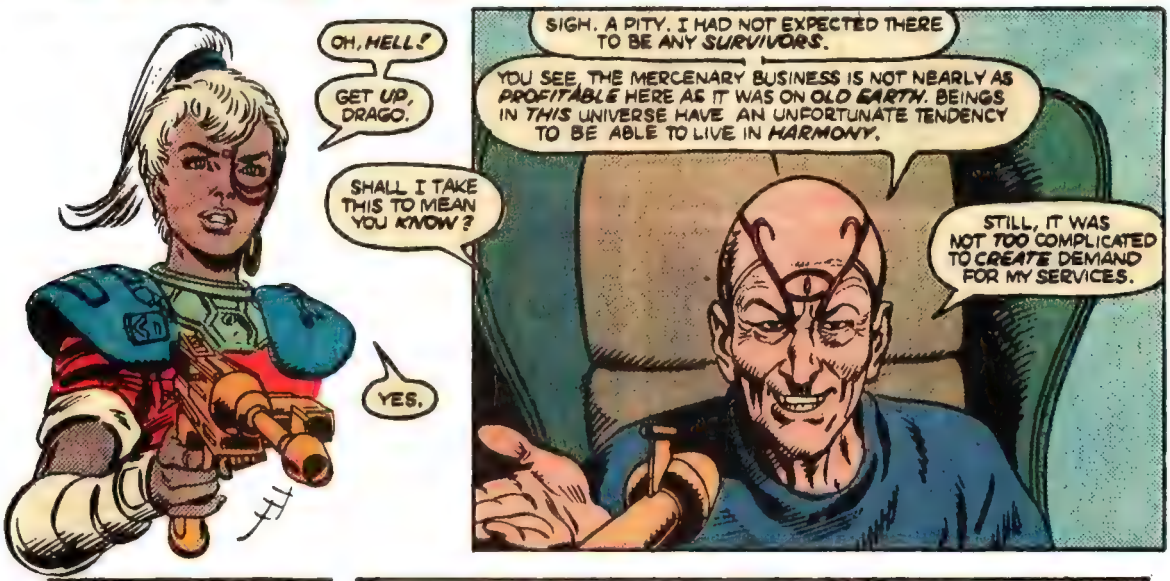

--BUT FIRST I'VE GOT SOME UNFINISHED BUSINESS TO TAKE CARE OF.
YEAH, I GUESS I UNDERSTAND.

GIVE ME STRENGTH... GIVE ME THE COURAGE TO GAIN MY RETRIBUTION...
...MY VENGEANCE!

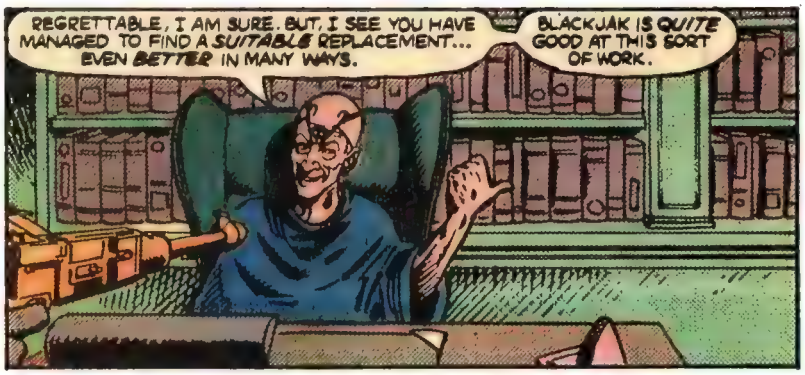

I'M READY NOW.
WANT ME TO COME WITH YOU, KID ?
NO, I'LL DO THIS MYSELF. WAIT HERE -- IT WON'T TAKE LONG.


YEAH, RIGHT.
GOOD LUCK, KID. YOU'RE GONNA NEED IT...

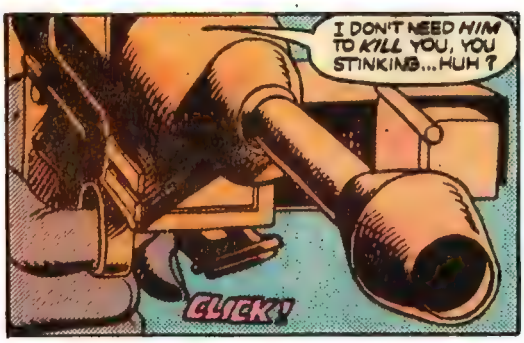

HELLO, DRAGO. I'VE COME TO... TO MAKE MY REPORT.
I AM PLEASED TO SEE YOU'VE SURVIVED ANOTHER CAMPAIGN, DART. SPEAK--I AM MOST EAGER TO HEAR WHAT YOU HAVE TO SAY.

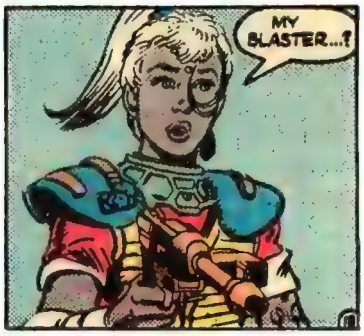

OH, HELL!
GET UP, DRAGO.
SHALL I TAKE THIS TO MEAN YOU KNOW?
YES.
SIGH. A PITY. I HAD NOT EXPECTED THERE TO BE ANY SURVIVORS.
YOU SEE, THE MERCENARY BUSINESS IS NOT NEARLY AS PROFITABLE HERE AS IT WAS ON OLD EARTH. BEINGS IN THIS UNIVERSE HAVE AN UNFORTUNATE TENDENCY TO BE ABLE TO LIVE IN HARMONY.
STILL, IT WAS NOT TOO COMPLICATED TO CREATE DEMAND FOR MY SERVICES.

DALIA'S DEAD.

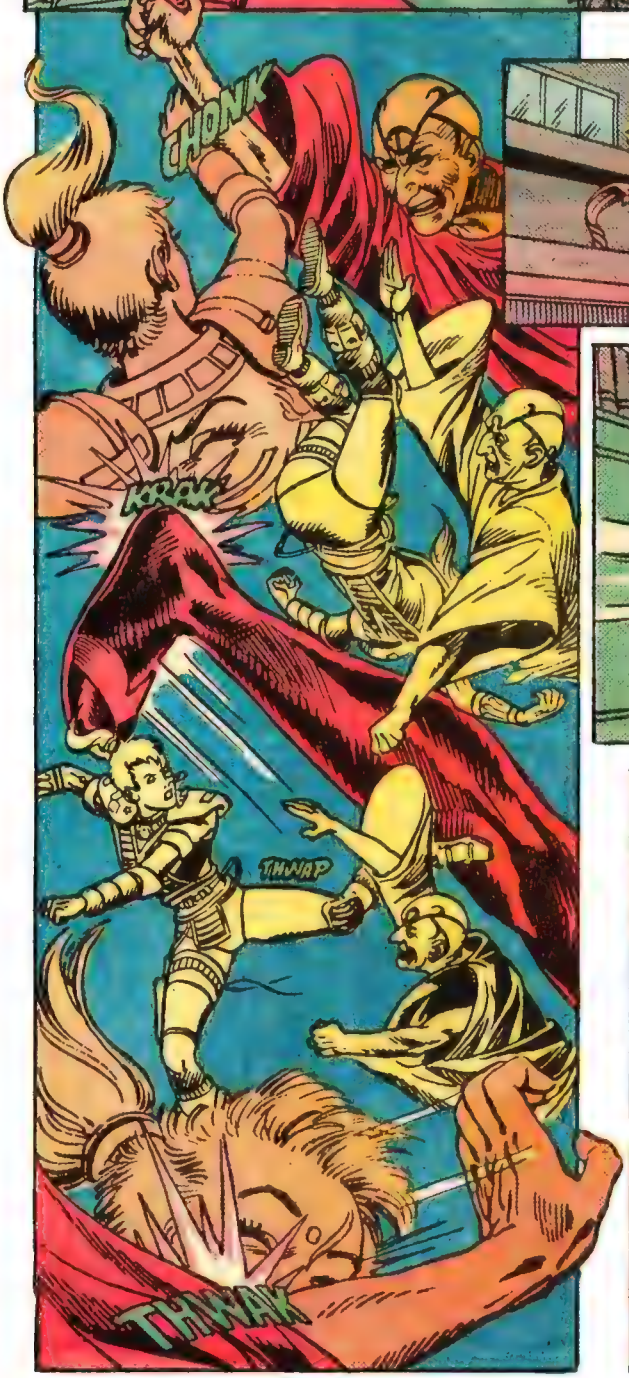

REGRETTABLE, I AM SURE. BUT, I SEE YOU HAVE MANAGED TO FIND A SUITABLE REPLACEMENT... EVEN BETTER IN MANY WAYS.
BLACKJAK IS QUITE GOOD AT THIS SORT OF WORK.

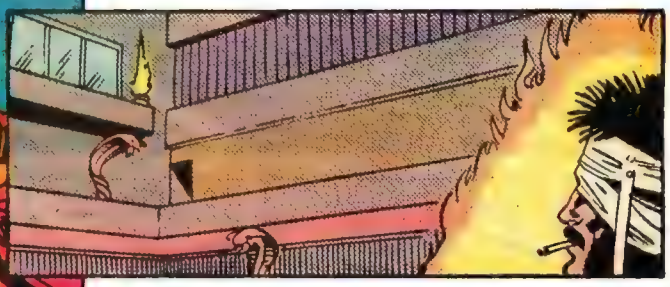
CLICK!

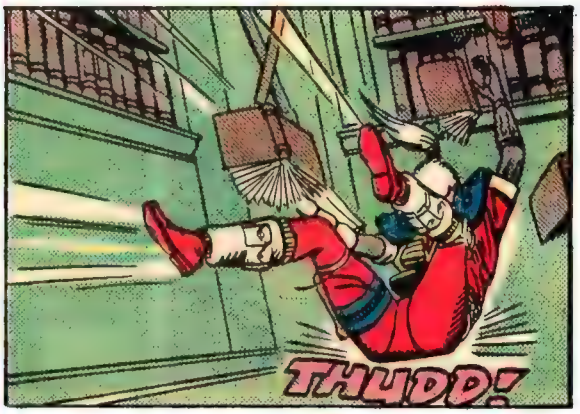

I DON'T NEED HIM TO KILL YOU, YOU STINKING... HUH?
CLICK!

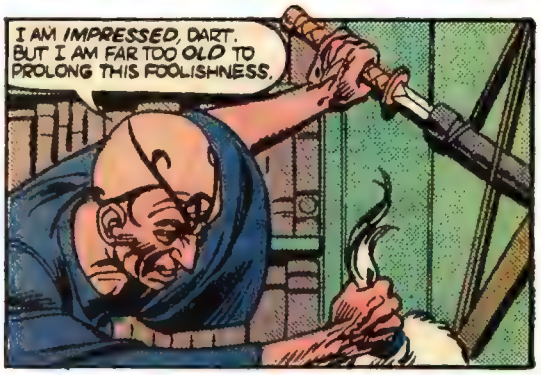

MY BLASTER...?

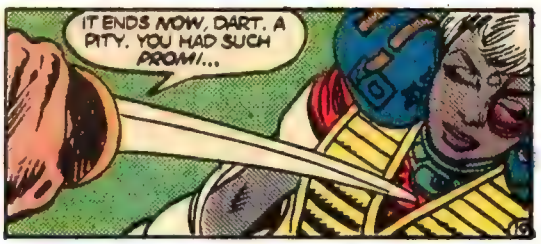
WHAPS!
...HAS BEEN NEUTRALIZED BY MY DEFENSE SCREENS.
I FEAR YOU SHALL HAVE TO RELY UPON YOUR NATURAL TALENTS, GIRL. PRAY YOU LEARNED YOUR LESSONS WELL!

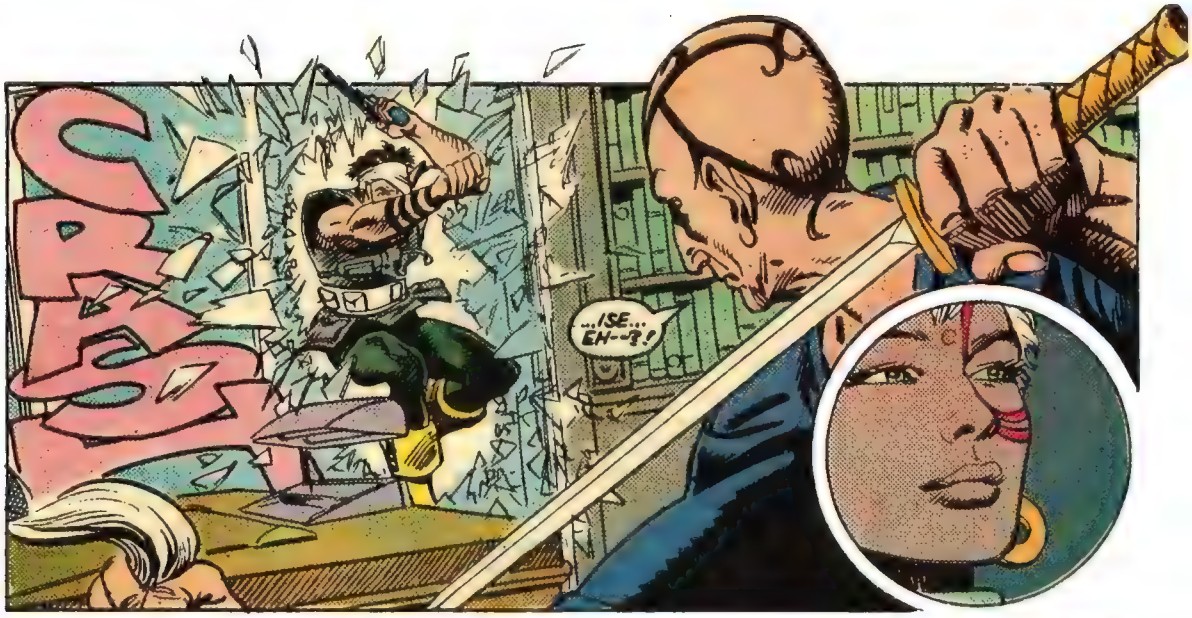

CHONK
KRAK
THWAP
THWAK



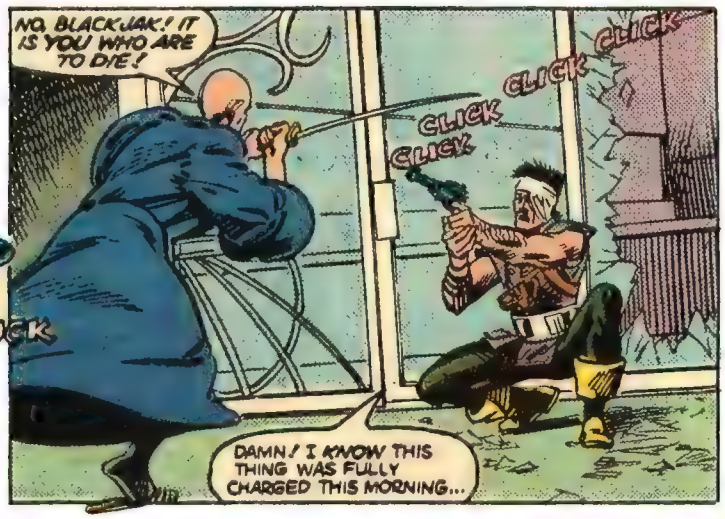

THUDD!


I AM IMPRESSED, DART. BUT I AM FAR TOO OLD TO PROLONG THIS FOOLISHNESS.


IT ENDS NOW, DART. A PITY. YOU HAD SUCH PROM!...

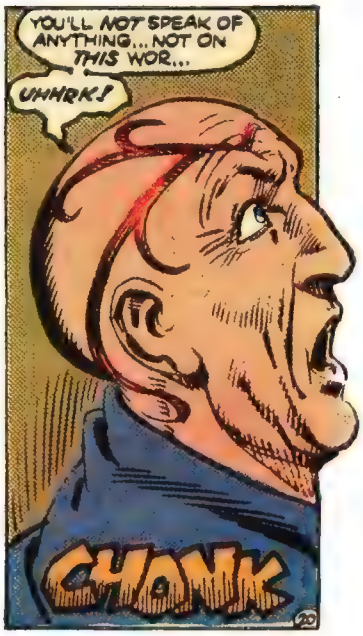

CRASH
...ISE... EH--?!

TIME TO SAY BYE-BYE, YOU OLD SLEAZEBALL!
HUH?
CLICK


NO, BLACKJAK! IT IS YOU WHO ARE TO DIE!
CLICK
CLICK
CLICK
CLICK
DAMN! I KNOW THIS THING WAS FULLY CHARGED THIS MORNING...

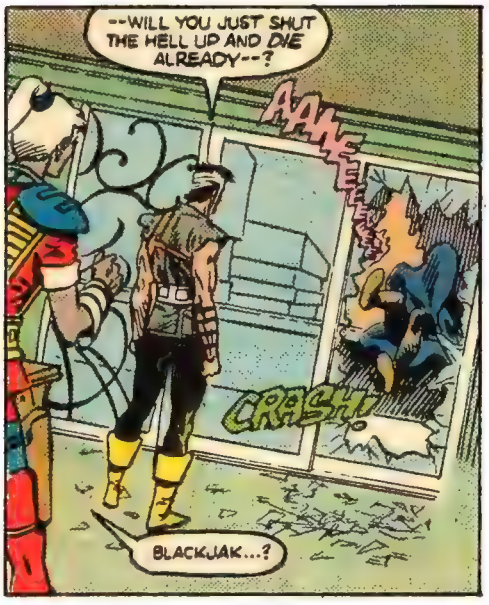
B-BLACKJAK... NEUTRALIZER SHIELDS... BLASTER U-USELESS...

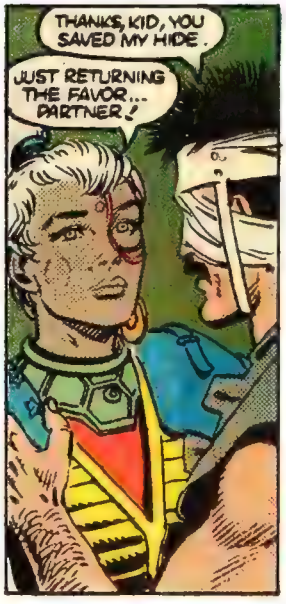
SWELL! REMIND ME TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT YOUR TIMING, KID!
SWOOSH

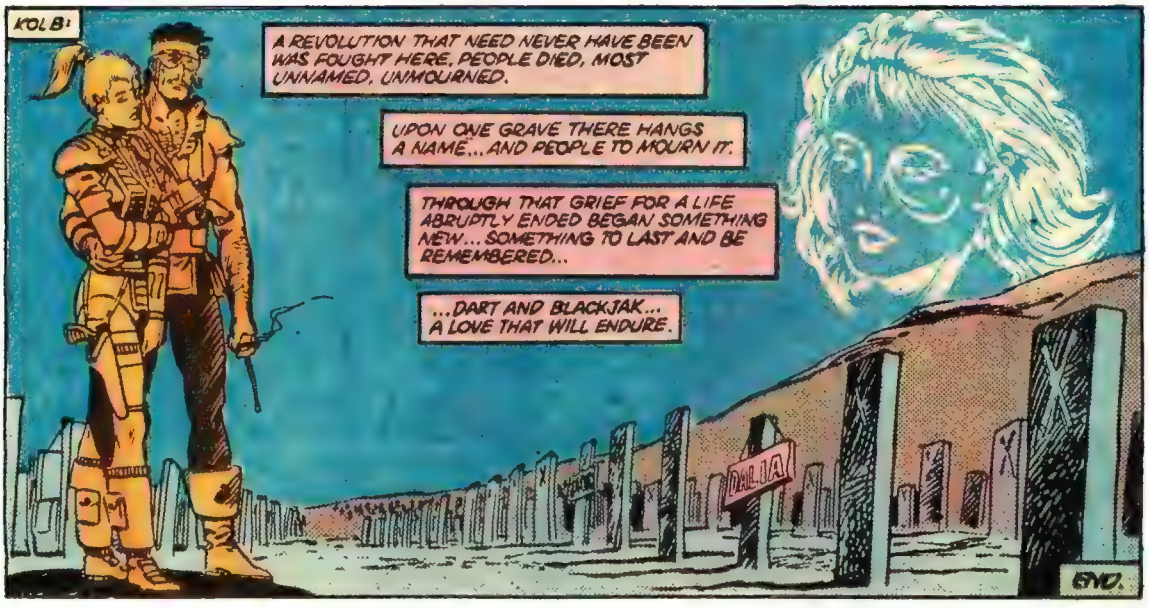

YOU'LL NOT SPEAK OF ANYTHING... NOT ON THIS WOR...
UHHRK!
CHONK

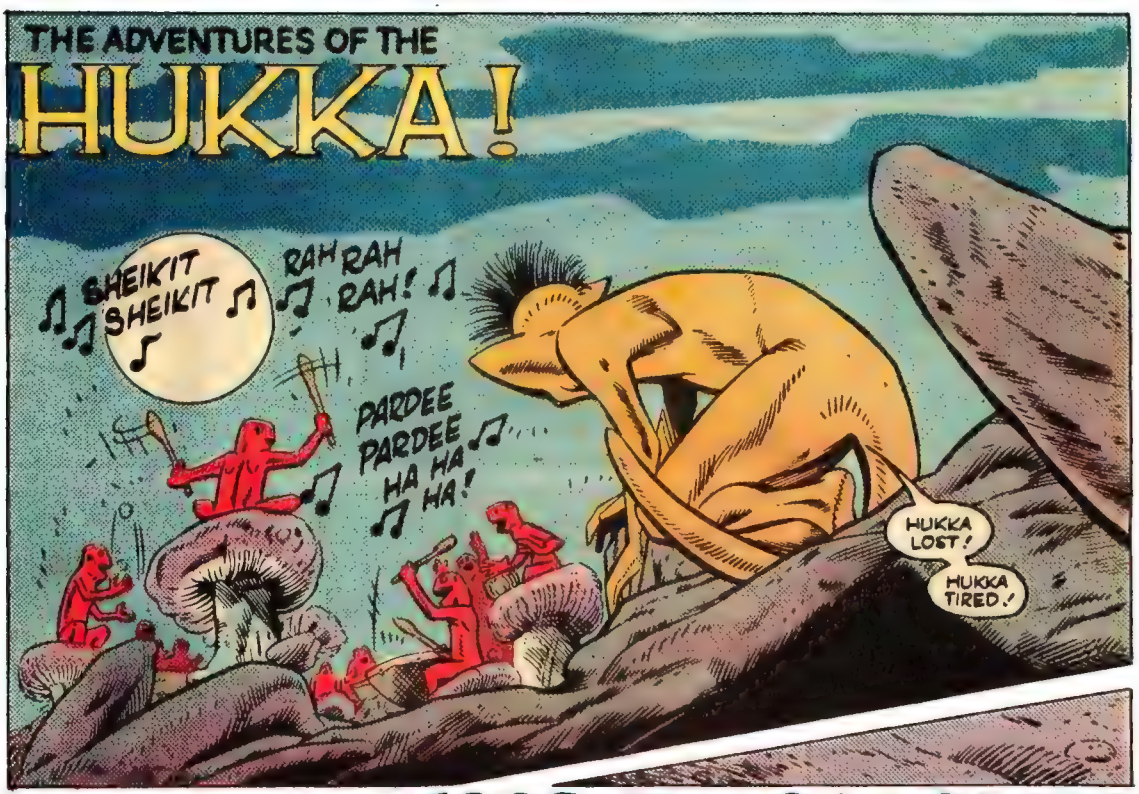
S-S-STRIKING F-FROM BEHIND... N-NEVER TAUGHT Y-YOU... TH-THA...
DRAGO--

SCHUNK


--WILL YOU JUST SHUT THE HELL UP AND DIE ALREADY--?
AAAHE
CRASH!
BLACKJAK...?


THANKS, KID, YOU SAVED MY HIDE.
JUST RETURNING THE FAVOR... PARTNER!


KOLB:
A REVOLUTION THAT NEED NEVER HAVE BEEN WAS FOUGHT HERE, PEOPLE DIED, MOST UNNAMED, UNMOURNED.
UPON ONE GRAVE THERE HANGS A NAME... AND PEOPLE TO MOURN IT.
THROUGH THAT GRIEF FOR A LIFE ABRUPTLY ENDED BEGAN SOMETHING NEW... SOMETHING TO LAST AND BE REMEMBERED...
...DART AND BLACKJAK... A LOVE THAT WILL ENDURE.
DALIA
END.



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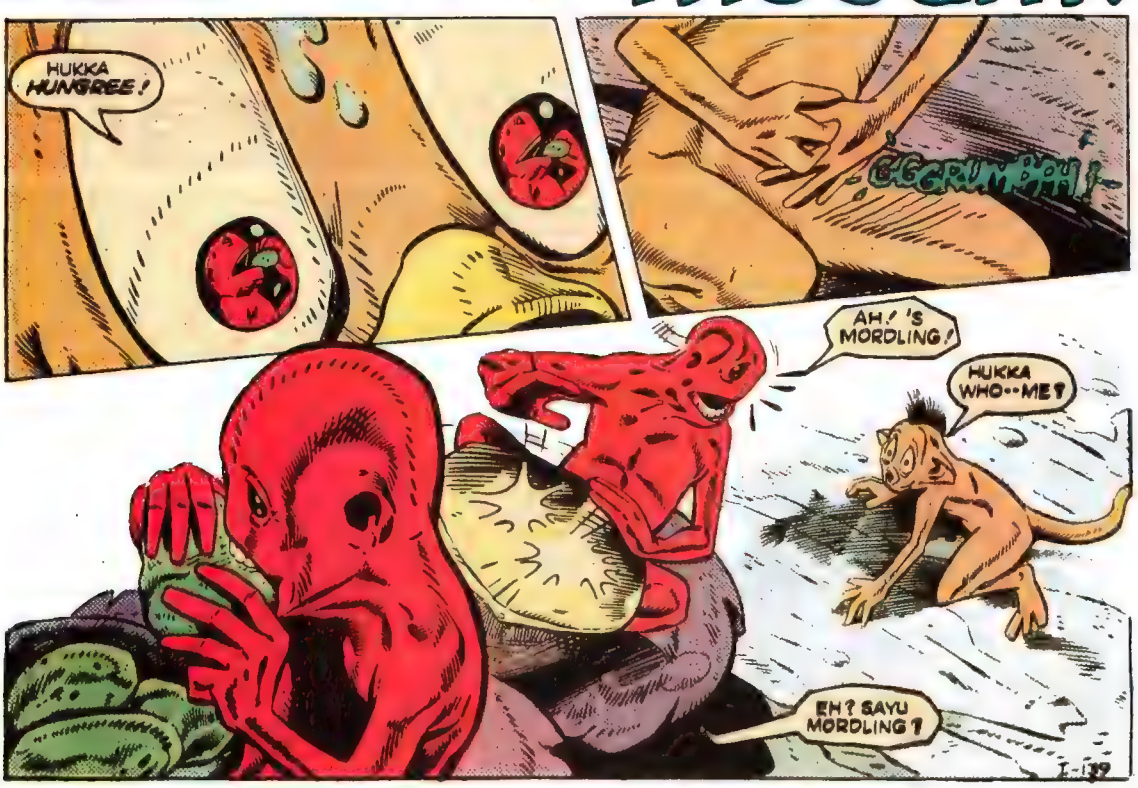
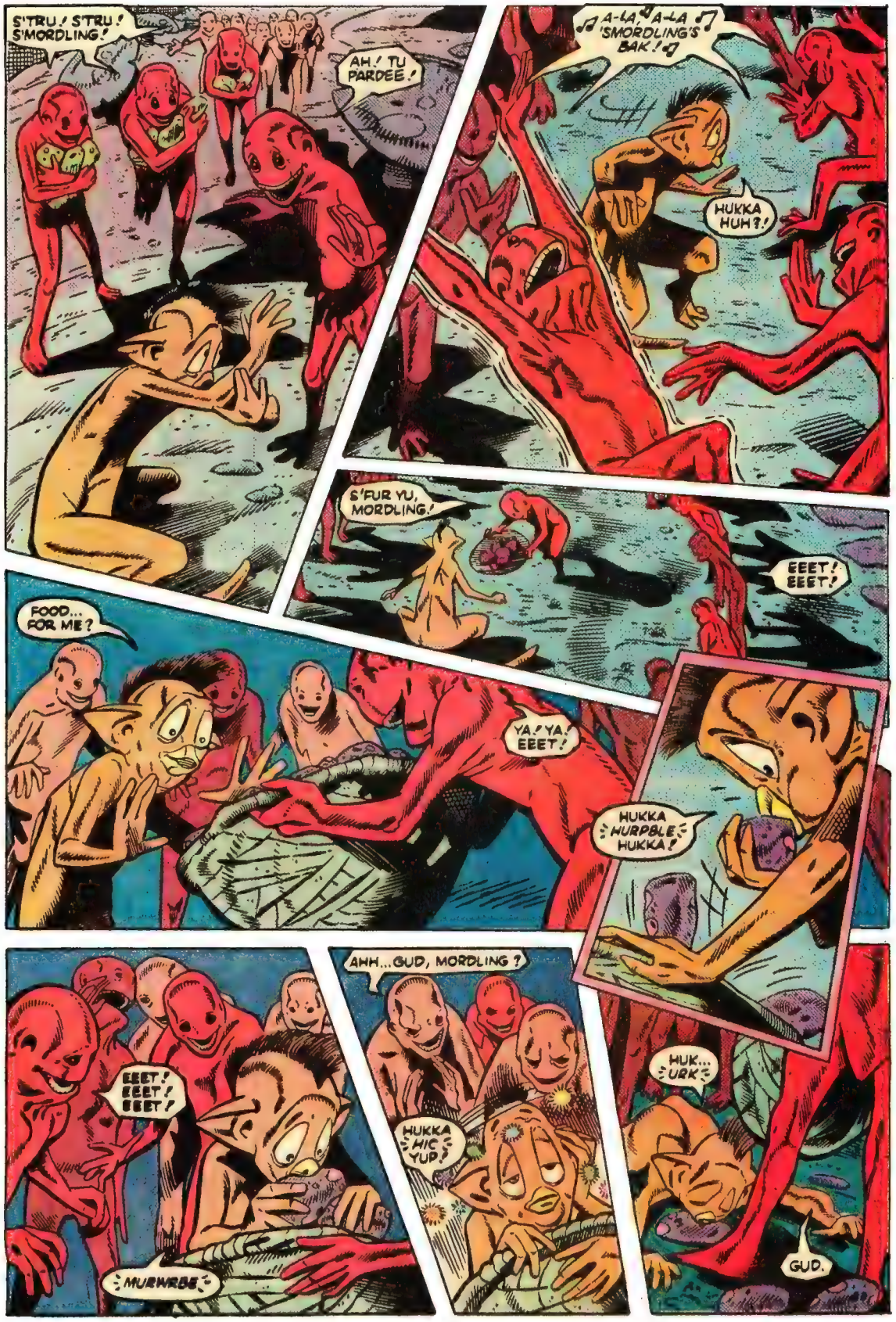
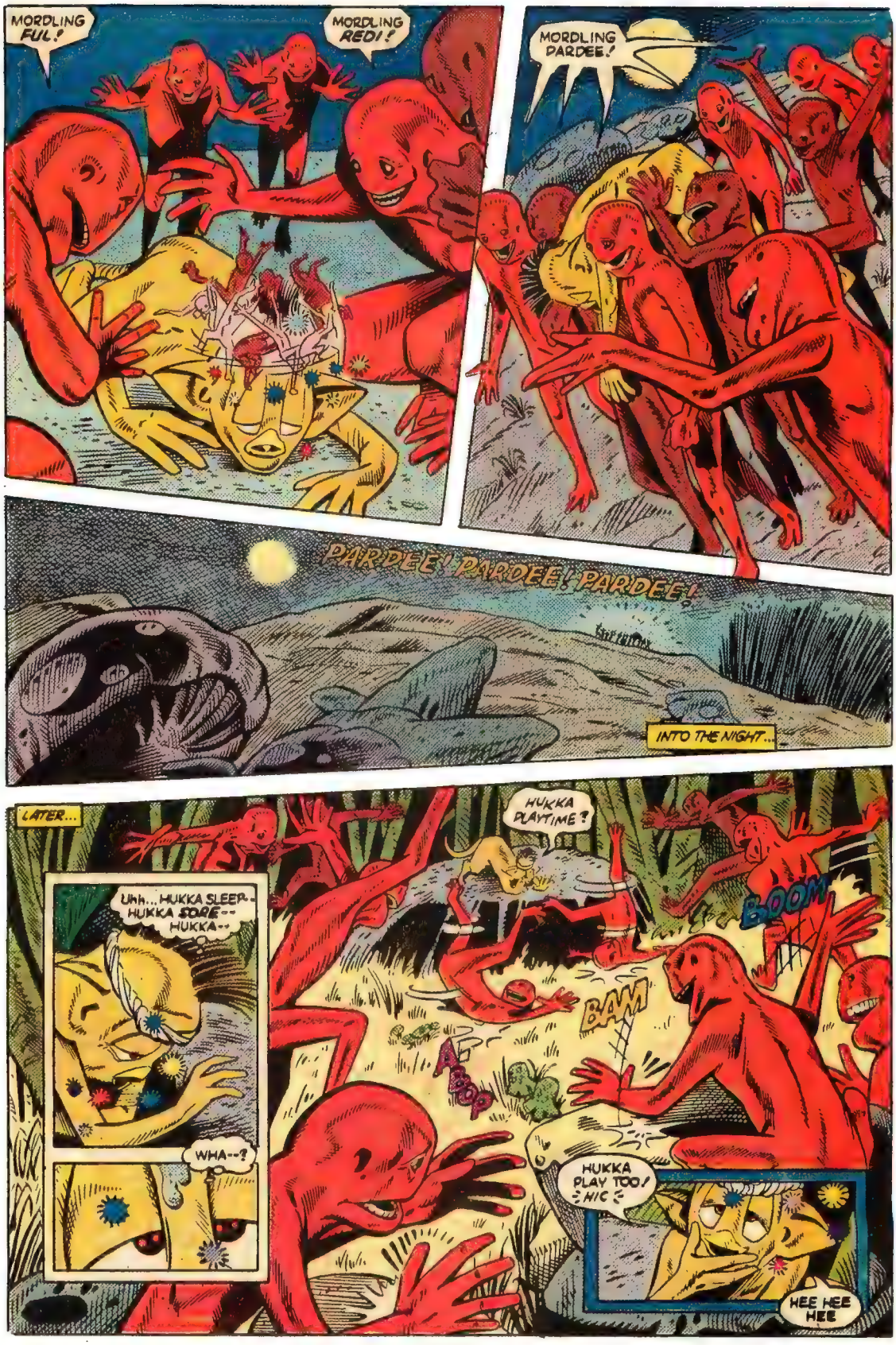
TOM ZIUKO: COLORIST
ANDY HELFER: EDITOR

FOOD FOR THOUGHT!

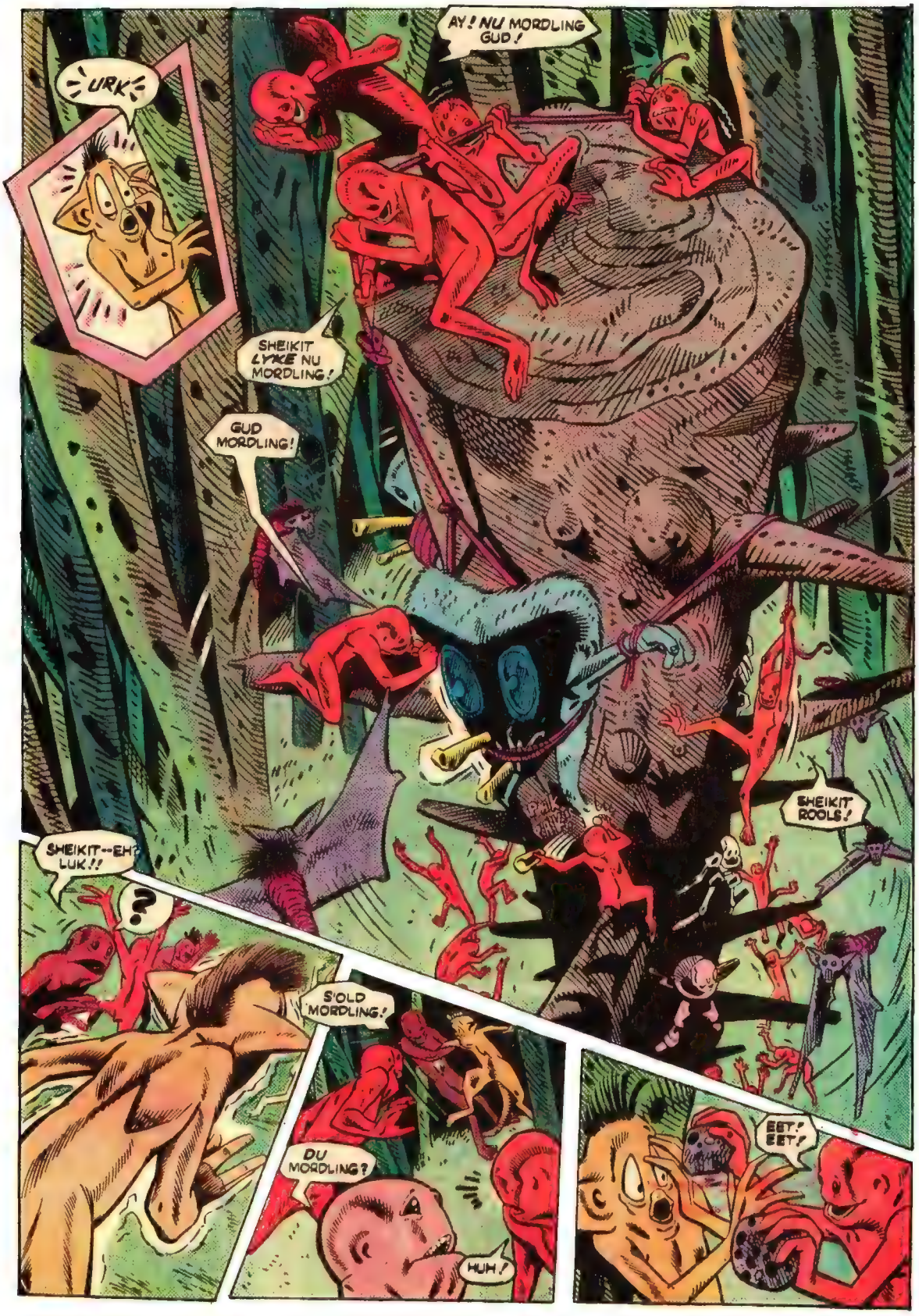


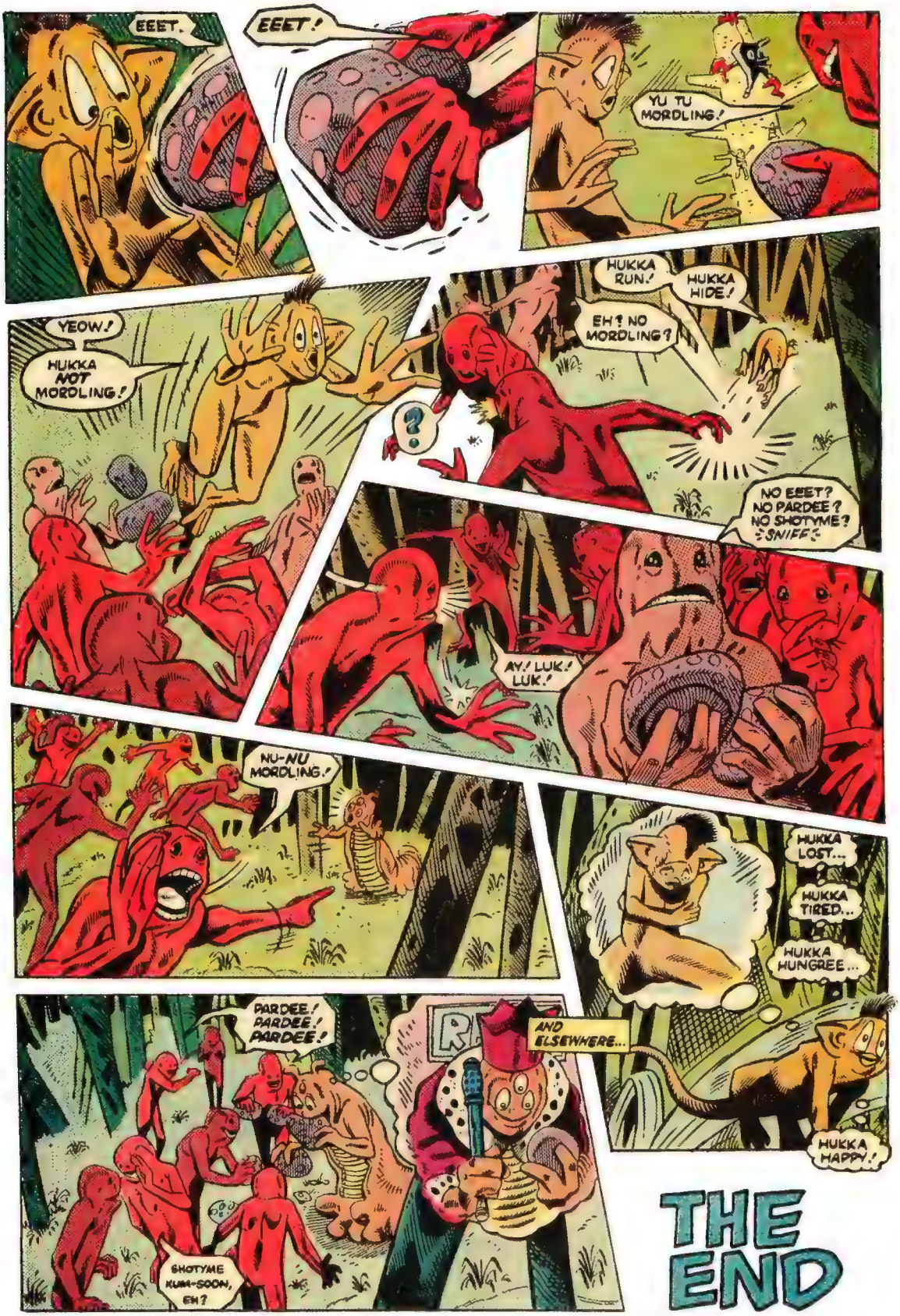

S'TRU! S'TRU! S'MORDLING!
AH! TU PARDEE!
♫ A-LA, A-LA 'SMORDLING'S BAK! ♫
HUKKA HUH?!
S'FUR YU, MORDLING!
EEET! EEET!
FOOD... FOR ME?
YA! YA! EEET!
HUKKA HURPBLE HUKKA!
EEET! EEET! EEET!
MURWRBE
AHH...GUD, MORDLING?
HUKKA HIC YUP!
HUK... URK
GUD.


MORDLING FUL!
MORDLING RED!
MORDLING DARDEE!
PARDEE! PARDEE! PARDEE!
INTO THE NIGHT...
LATER...
HUKKA PLAYTIME?
Uhh... HUKKA SLEEP-- HUKKA SORE-- HUKKA--
WHA--?
BOOM
BAM
HUKKA PLAY TOO! HIC
HEE HEE HEE

AH! MORDLING GEDDUP!
HUKKA... WANNA PLAY :HIC:
HUKKA PLAY...
MORDLING REDI!!
HMM... MORDLING = HUKKA?
SHEIKIT ROOLS!
EX
MORDLING = KING...
HUKKA = KING!
HMMM... MORE.
HUKKA WANT MORE, HEE HEE HEE!
HUKKA BIG...
HUKKA STRONG...
MORE
HUKKA GOD!!
HUKKA--
MORDLING KUM-NOW!
'ES SHOTYME!
YA! YA! SHOTYME!!
HUH?

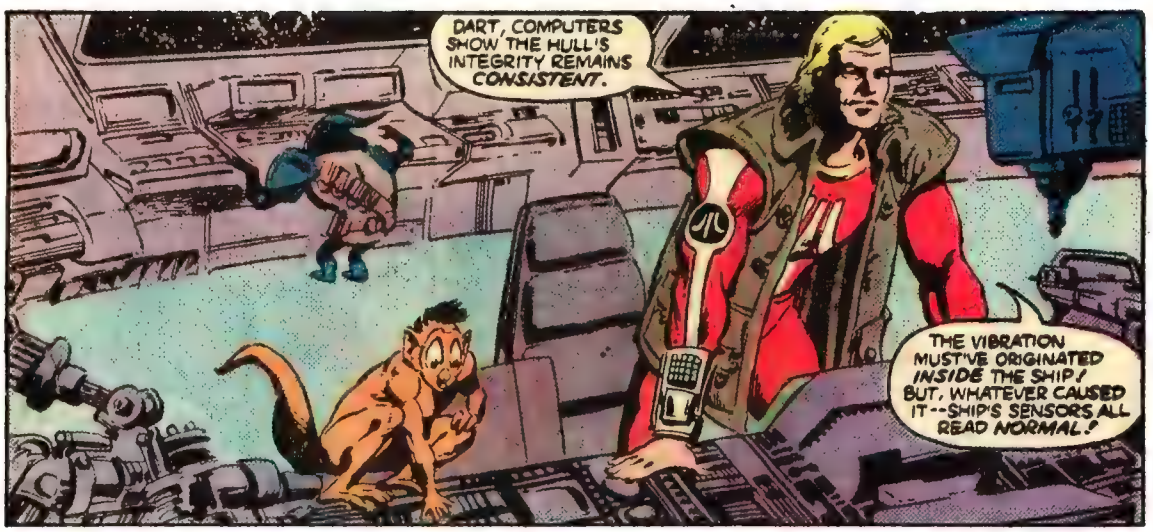
OKAY-- HEE HEE-- HUKKA GO!
NU MORDLING?!
WATE! KUM C-- NU MORDLING!
WE C!
THUN
MOMENTS LATER...
PARDEE! PARDEE!
HUKKA HEY! NO FAIR!
HUKKA E MORDLING!
PARDEE! PARDEE!
HIC
PARDEE! PARDEE!
HUKKA WAIT! HUK-- HIC
HUKKA MORDLING!
HUKKA MORD--
HUKKA MORDLING!


URK!
AY! NU MORDLING GUD!
SHEIKIT LYKE NU MORDLING!
GUD MORDLING!
SHEIKIT ROOLS!
SHEIKIT--EH? LUK!!
?
S'OLD MORDLING!
DU MORDLING?
HUH?
EET! EET!

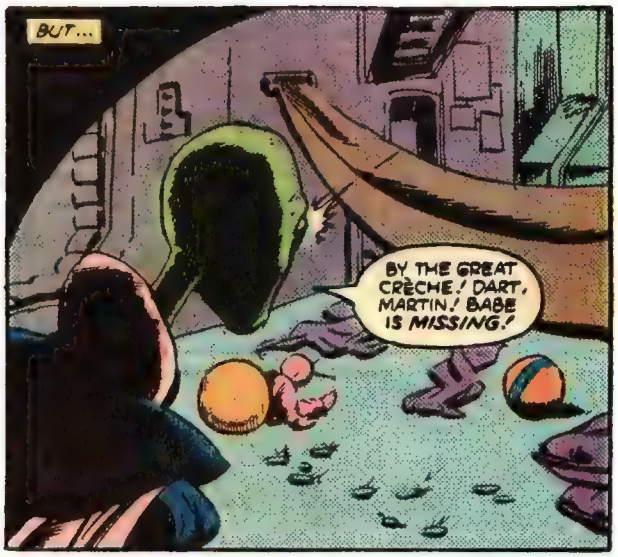

EEET.
EEET!
YU TU MORDLING!
HUKKA RUN!
HUKKA HIDE!
EH? NO MORDLING?
YEOW!
HUKKA NOT MORDLING!
NO EEET? NO PARDEE? NO SHOTYME? :SNIFF:
AY! LUK! LUK!
NU-NU MORDLING!
HUKKA LOST...
HUKKA TIRED...
HUKKA HUNGREE...
HUKKA HAPPY!
PARDEE! PARDEE! PARDEE!
AND ELSEWHERE...
SHOTYME KUM-SOON, EH?
THE END

HIS NAME IS PAKRAT. ONCE HE WAS MERELY AN INFAMOUS PROFESSIONAL THIEF. THEN A TWIST OF FATE TURNED HIM INTO A WORLD-HOPPING ADVENTURER.
NOW HE CAN ONLY DREAM ABOUT THE SIMPLE LIFE-- THE SAFE LIFE--THE LIFE HE LED BEFORE FATE CAST HIM INTO THE RANKS OF A GROUP KNOWN TO US AS THE--
ATARI FORCE
YAAAK!
THAT WAS NO NIGHTMARE--
--THE SHIP'S BEEN HIT!
SECOND SKIN!
DWIGHT JON ZIMMERMAN STORY
JAMES FRY PENCILS
KYLE BAKER INKS
DAVID CODY WEISS LETTERS
TOM ZIUKO COLORS
ANDY HELFER EDITOR

EVERYBODY-- WAKE UP!
GRAB YOUR GEAR AND MAN THE LIFEBOATS!
WOMEN AND MARKIANS FIR--
HEY! THE SHAKING'S STOPPED, AND--
EH, WHAT'S THAT GLITTERING STUFF?
IT LOOKS LIKE--
--JEWELS!
OOOH! THERE MUST BE A SMALL FORTUNE OF THESE PRETTY STONES--AND THEY'RE MINE FOR THE TAKING!
I KNEW MY LUCK WAS GONNA CHANGE! IT HAD TO! JUST WAIT'LL I--
UH-OH! HERE COME THE OTHERS! I'D BETTER STOW THESE BABIES BEFORE--
PAKRAT, EVERYTHING SECURE HERE?
YEAH--I GUESS SO! ER-- I JUST WOKE UP!
SO DID WE! SOMETHING PRETTY POWERFUL JUST ROCKED SCANNER ONE!
MARTIN, WHAT ARE THE SHIP'S MONITORS REPORTING?
2


DART, COMPUTERS SHOW THE HULL'S INTEGRITY REMAINS CONSISTENT.
THE VIBRATION MUST'VE ORIGINATED INSIDE THE SHIP! BUT, WHATEVER CAUSED IT--SHIP'S SENSORS ALL READ NORMAL!

MAYBE WE'VE GOT A STOWAWAY, MARTIN...START ORGANIC SCANNING SEQUENCE!
THIS ONE HAS NOT SEEN BABE! PERHAPS HE IS STILL SLEEPING-- OR INJURED!


BUT...
BY THE GREAT CRÈCHE! DART, MARTIN! BABE IS MISSING!

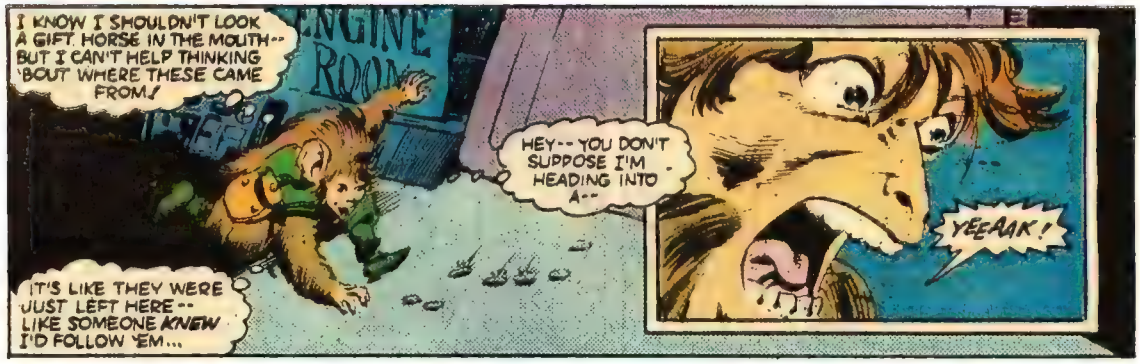
YAAAK!
SQUIZZ
MARTIN! SCANNER ONE CAN'T TAKE MUCH MORE OF THIS ABUSE! HAVE YOU PINPOINTED THE VIBRATIONS' SOURCE YET?

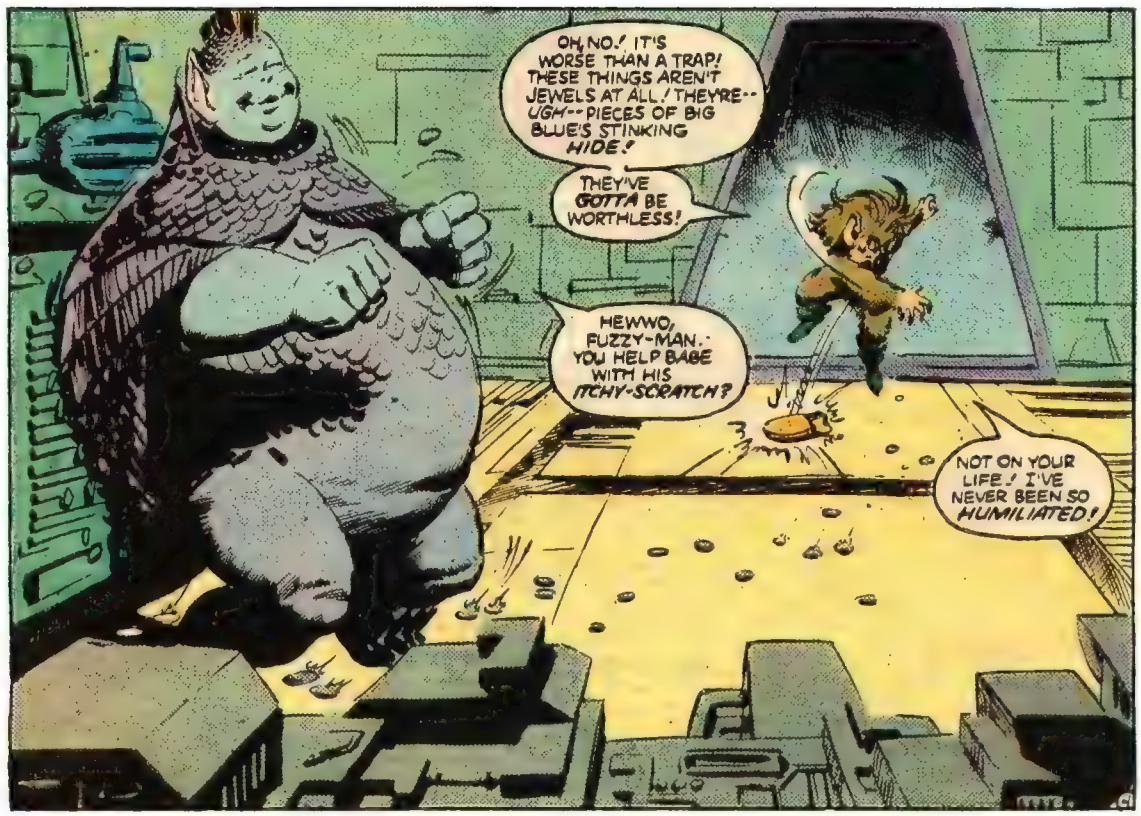
NEGATIVE! AND THAT LAST JOLT KNOCKED OUT THE SHIP'S INTERNAL SENSORS! NOW WE'RE ON OUR OWN!
HUKKA OW HUKKA!
IF THERE'S A STOWAWAY CAUSING THIS-- CHANCES ARE HE'S CAPTURED BABE! DON'T TAKE ANY CHANCES! FIND HIM FAST AND KNOCK HIM OUT WITH YOUR FIRST SHOT!

POOR BABE! THIS ONE SHOULD HAVE CHECKED ON HIM IMMEDIATELY!
WE'D BETTER SPLIT UP! BE SURE TO KEEP IN CLOSE RADIO CONTACT!
EH? WHAT'S THAT?

MORE PRETTY STONES! WHY GO AFTER THAT BIG BLUE JERK--WHEN I CAN GO FORTUNE HUNTING INSTEAD!
I'LL TAKE THIS CORRIDOR.

YOU GOT IT, PAKRAT. OKAY, LET'S FIND THAT STOWAWAY!
HEE HEE! WHAT A BUNCH! THEY NEVER SUSPECTED FOR A SECOND! LET THEM LOOK FOR TROUBLE...ME. I'M ON THE FORTUNE TRAIL!


I KNOW I SHOULDN'T LOOK A GIFT HORSE IN THE MOUTH--BUT I CAN'T HELP THINKING 'BOUT WHERE THESE CAME FROM!
ENGINE ROOM
IT'S LIKE THEY WERE JUST LEFT HERE--LIKE SOMEONE KNEW I'D FOLLOW 'EM...
HEY--YOU DON'T SUPPOSE I'M HEADING INTO A--
YEEAAK!


OH, NO! IT'S WORSE THAN A TRAP! THESE THINGS AREN'T JEWELS AT ALL! THEY'RE--UGH--PIECES OF BIG BLUE'S STINKING HIDE!
THEY'VE GOTTA BE WORTHLESS!
HEWWO, FUZZY-MAN. YOU HELP BABE WITH HIS ITCHY-SCRATCH?
NOT ON YOUR LIFE! I'VE NEVER BEEN SO HUMILIATED!

PAKRAT, WE HEARD YOU ON THE RADIO! WHAT--OH, NO! BABE--
STOP!
BUT MORPHEA'S PLEA COMES TOO LATE!
PIECES OF THE EGGITE'S TOUGH HIDE HAVE ALREADY BEEN SUCKED INTO THE LIFE-SUPPORT MECHANISM!
THE RESULT IS...
EEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE
EMERGENCY
HUKKA NOMASK! HUKKA YUK! HUKKA!
GLAM YES
LIFE-SUPPORT SYSTEM FAILURE! EVERYONE INTO OXYGEN MASKS!
NOT ANOTHER WORD, PAKRAT! BABE APPEARS TO BE SHEDDING! YOU OF ALL CREATURES SHOULD KNOW HOW MADDENINGLY UNCOMFORTABLE THAT CAN BE!
YOU COULDN'T USE YOUR HANDS! NO-- YOU HAD TO TURN THE WHOLE SHIP INTO YOUR PRIVATE BACKSCRATCHER!
BABE SOWWY!
SORRY'S NOT ENOUGH! YOU ALMOST GOT US KILLED! AND--
AT LEAST I WOULDN'T HAVE RUBBED AGAINST THE LS SYSTEM!
YOU ARE ALSO NOT A CHILD!

AND THIS IS NOT THE TIME FOR US TO BE *ARGUING* AMONGST OURSELVES! DART, WHAT HAPPENED HERE?

CHRIS! HUKKA SCARED! HUKKA!

HEY-- TAKE IT EASY, FELLA! WE'RE NOT DEAD YET, Y'KNOW!

QUICKLY, DART TELLS MARTIN THE DETAILS. THEN...

HMMM. THIS CHIP LOOKS *SHARP.*

LET'S SEE *HOW* SHARP!

SSSCRRRRRRRCH

EYOWTCH! COULDN'T YOU DO THAT SOMEWHERE *ELSE?!*

YOU LOOK *WORRIED,* MARTIN! WHAT'S WRONG?

THIS FRAME IS MADE OF *RHYOSEEN STEEL*-- THE TOUGHEST ALLOY IN THE MULTIVERSE. AND THIS CHIP SCRATCHED IT--*DEEPLY!*

THEN THE GUTS OF THE LS SYSTEM COULD BE *DESTROYED!* DAMN!

MAYBE--MAYBE NOT, TEMPEST! BUT TO ASSESS THE DAMAGE, AND MAKE THE REPAIRS, WE NEED *TIME!* MORE TIME THAN THE OXYGEN SUPPLY IN OUR SUITS CAN GIVE US!

WUMP!

DART--LET'S CHECK THE *CHARTS* AND FIND A PLANET CLOSE ENOUGH TO USE AS A *REPAIR BASE!*

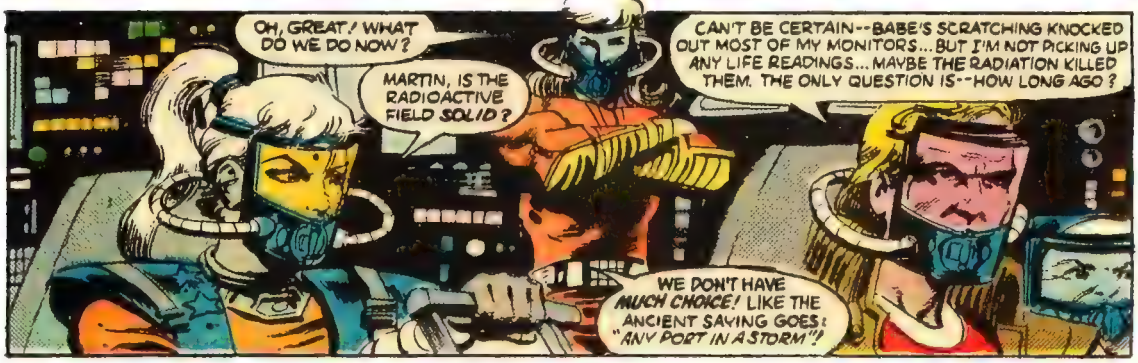
WHAT IF WE CAN'T?

WE HAVE TO-- OTHERWISE WE'RE *DEAD!*

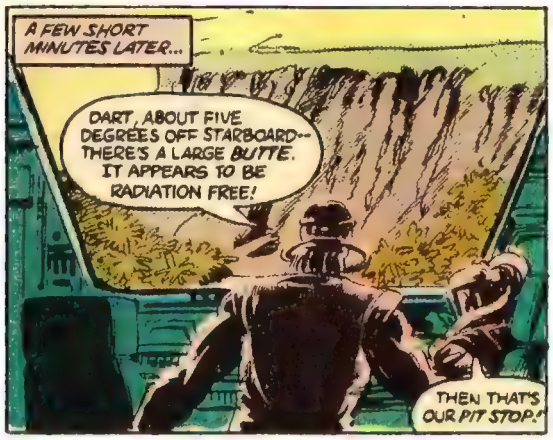
THEY CUT STEEL! THEY CUT STEEL! THEY'RE STILL VALUABLE! I'M STILL RICH!

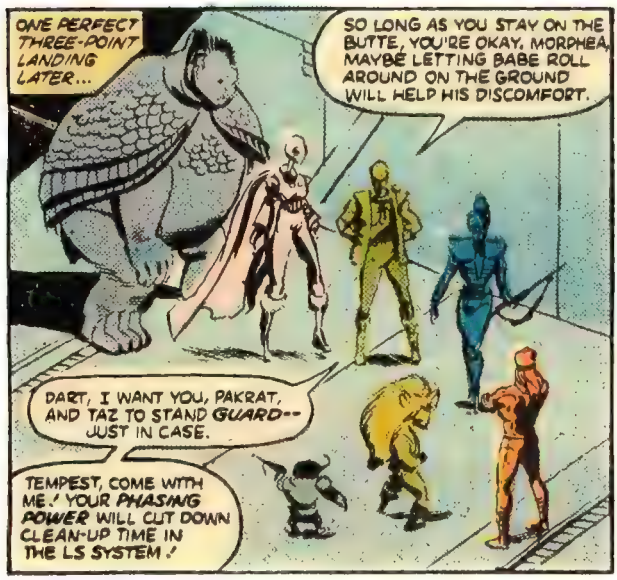
NEW EARTH'S INDUSTRIALISTS WOULD PAY MILLIONS--FOR PIECES OF SKIN I CAN COLLECT FREE!
BUT ETERNAL WEALTH HAS ITS PRICE--NOW I'VE GOTTA BE PARTNERS WITH A BLUE PINEAPPLE!! WELL...NO TIME LIKE THE PRESENT...
LOOK, BABE, YOU BIG CUTIE--I'VE--UH--BEEN TOUGH ON YOU IN THE PAST, BUT I'VE SEEN THE ERROR OF MY WAYS. NO HARD FEELINGS, OKAY? HEY, MAYBE I CAN HELP YOU WITH YOUR PROBLEM.
THANK YOU, FUZZY-MAN.
MEANWHILE, IN THE NAVIGATION ROOM...
MARTIN, I THINK I MAY HAVE FOUND SOMETHING IN THE CYGNUS V QUADRANT.
I'LL RUN A DETAILED CHECK--
SUDDENLY--
OH, NO!
BABE--CAUGHT IN AN EXPLOSION!
THE VISION'S GONE--SO FAST, THAT IF I DIDN'T KNOW BETTER, I'D SAY I NEVER HAD IT.
BUT IT STILL MIGHT BE A GLIMPSE INTO A FUTURE--AND NOT OUR FUTURE.
THAT MUST BE WHAT IT IS--A PSYCHIC FALSE ALARM. WHY ELSE WOULD IT HAVE APPEARED AND VANISHED SO QUICKLY?
DART--YOU WERE RIGHT! YOU FOUND OUR PLANET!
I'M LOCKING IN COORDINATES NOW!

SOON...
HERE WE ARE! JUST IN TIME, TOO! WE ONLY HAVE A HALF-HOUR LEFT IN-- MARTIN, WHAT'S WRONG?
HOT SPOTS, DART-- THOUSANDS OF THEM! THIS WORLD MUST HAVE SUFFERED A NUCLEAR WAR!
THIS PLANET IS ONE HUGE RADIOACTIVE WASTELAND!

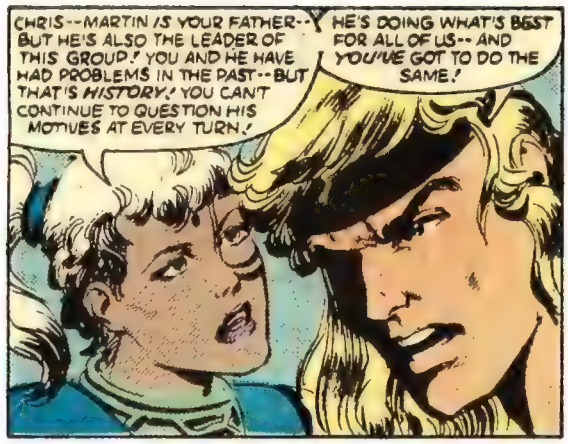

OH, GREAT! WHAT DO WE DO NOW?
MARTIN, IS THE RADIOACTIVE FIELD SOLID?
CAN'T BE CERTAIN--BABE'S SCRATCHING KNOCKED OUT MOST OF MY MONITORS... BUT I'M NOT PICKING UP ANY LIFE READINGS... MAYBE THE RADIATION KILLED THEM. THE ONLY QUESTION IS--HOW LONG AGO?
WE DON'T HAVE MUCH CHOICE! LIKE THE ANCIENT SAYING GOES: "ANY PORT IN A STORM"!

SO LET'S FIND US A RADIATION-FREE "ISLAND"!

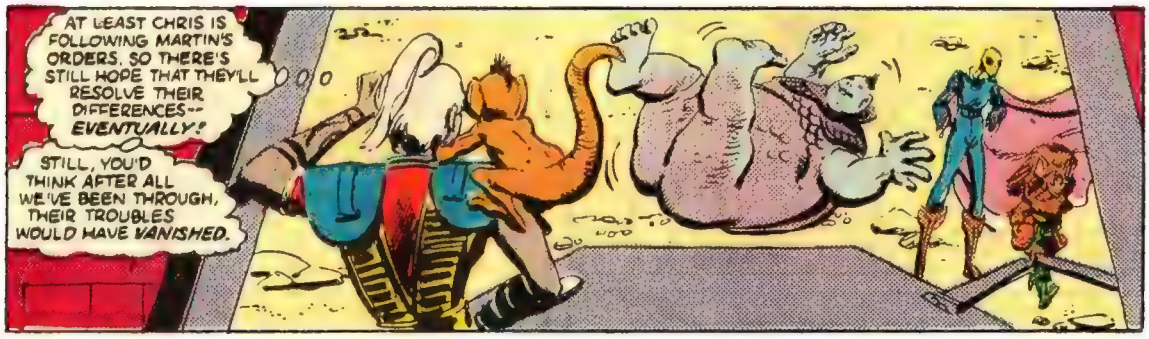

A FEW SHORT MINUTES LATER...
DART, ABOUT FIVE DEGREES OFF STARBOARD-- THERE'S A LARGE BUTTE. IT APPEARS TO BE RADIATION FREE!
THEN THAT'S OUR PIT STOP!

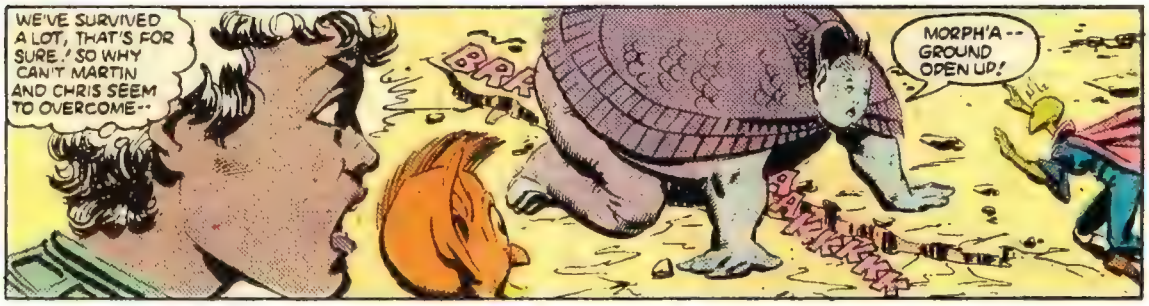

ONE PERFECT THREE-POINT LANDING LATER...
SO LONG AS YOU STAY ON THE BUTTE, YOU'RE OKAY. MORPHEA, MAYBE LETTING BABE ROLL AROUND ON THE GROUND WILL HELP HIS DISCOMFORT.
DART, I WANT YOU, PAKRAT, AND TAZ TO STAND GUARD-- JUST IN CASE.
TEMPEST, COME WITH ME! YOUR PHASING POWER WILL CUT DOWN CLEAN-UP TIME IN THE LS SYSTEM!

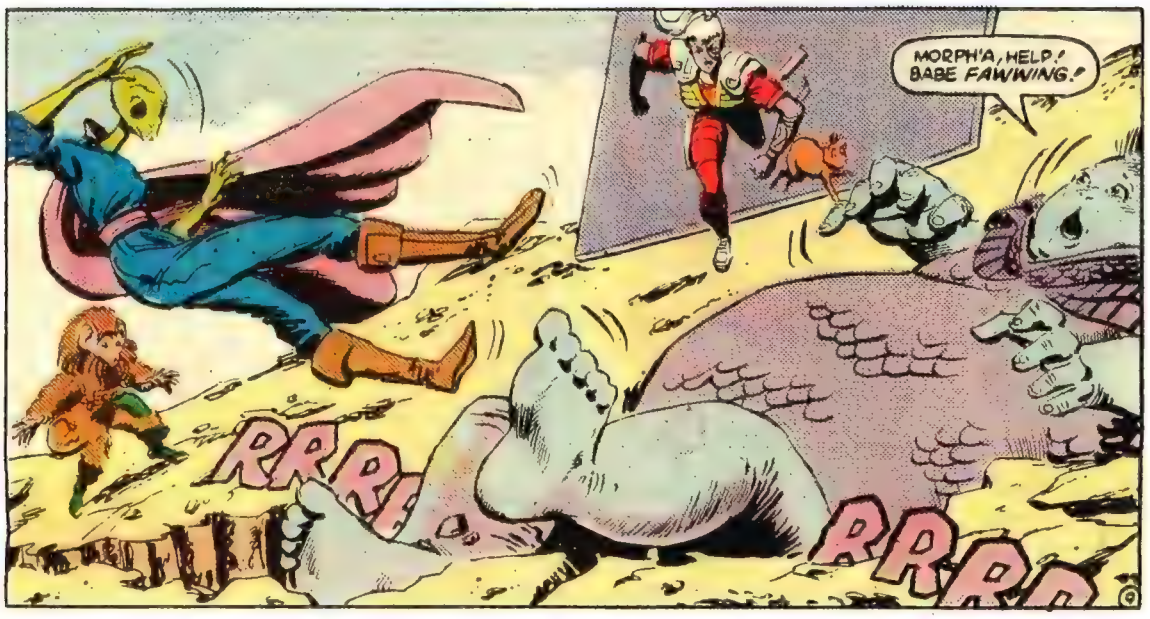
OH, GREAT! EVERYONE ELSE GOES OUTSIDE--WHERE THEY MAY OR MAY NOT GET CONTAMINATED BY THIS PLANET'S RADIATION! BUT YOU WANT ME TO STAY INSIDE WHERE IT'S SAFE--JUST BECAUSE I'M YOUR SON!
GET SOMEONE ELSE TO DO YOUR DIRTY WORK, DAD--I CAN TAKE CARE OF MYSELF!

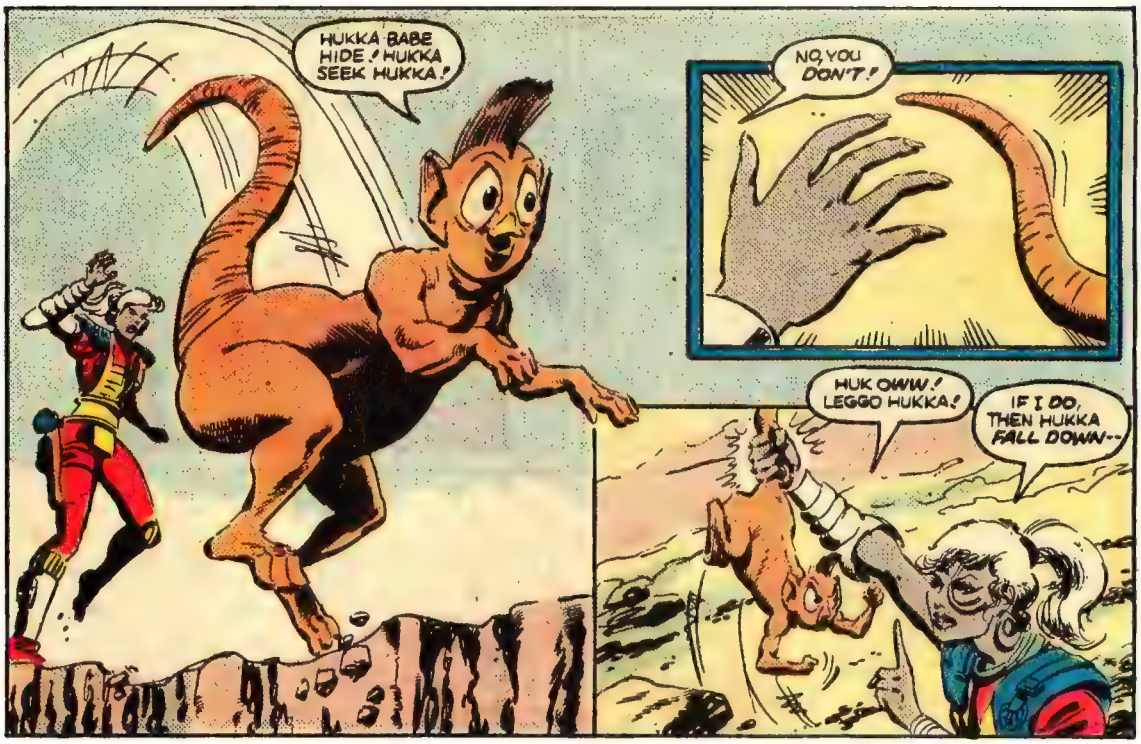

CHRIS--MARTIN IS YOUR FATHER--BUT HE'S ALSO THE LEADER OF THIS GROUP! YOU AND HE HAVE HAD PROBLEMS IN THE PAST--BUT THAT'S HISTORY! YOU CAN'T CONTINUE TO QUESTION HIS MOTIVES AT EVERY TURN!
HE'S DOING WHAT'S BEST FOR ALL OF US--AND YOU'VE GOT TO DO THE SAME!

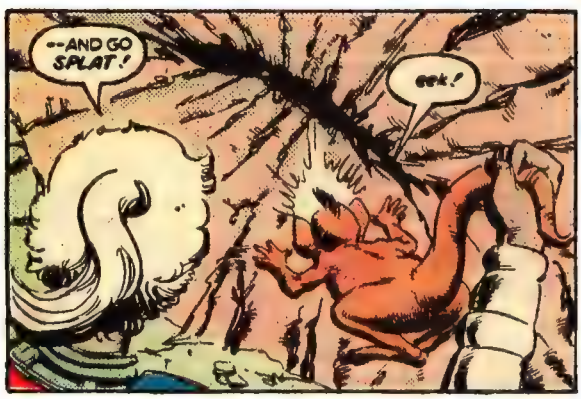
MAYBE YOU'RE RIGHT--BUT MAYBE YOU GIVE MY FATHER TOO MUCH CREDIT! HE MIGHT BE DOING THE RIGHT THING--BUT I'VE KNOWN HIM LONG ENOUGH TO KNOW HE'S DOING IT FOR ALL THE WRONG REASONS!
ANYWAY--I'LL DO WHAT HE WANTS--THIS TIME!

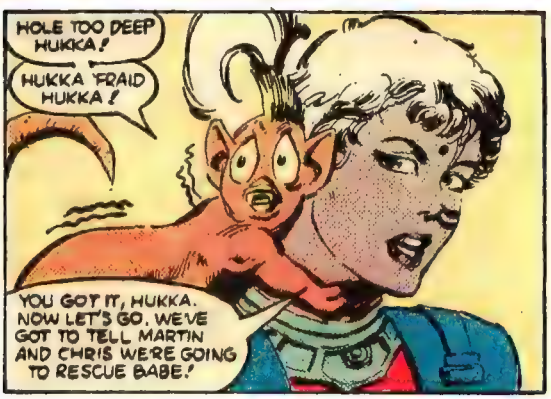

AT LEAST CHRIS IS FOLLOWING MARTIN'S ORDERS, SO THERE'S STILL HOPE THAT THEY'LL RESOLVE THEIR DIFFERENCES--EVENTUALLY!
STILL, YOU'D THINK AFTER ALL WE'VE BEEN THROUGH, THEIR TROUBLES WOULD HAVE VANISHED.

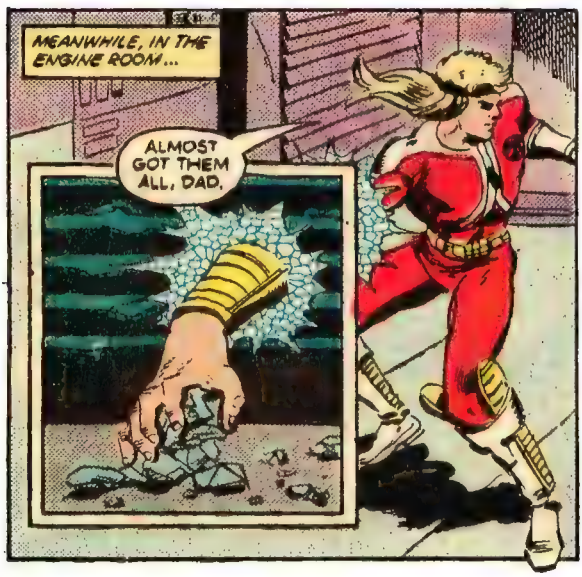

WE'VE SURVIVED A LOT, THAT'S FOR SURE! SO WHY CAN'T MARTIN AND CHRIS SEEM TO OVERCOME--
MORPH'A--GROUND OPEN UP!


MORPH'A, HELP! BABE FAWWING!
RRRI
RRRR

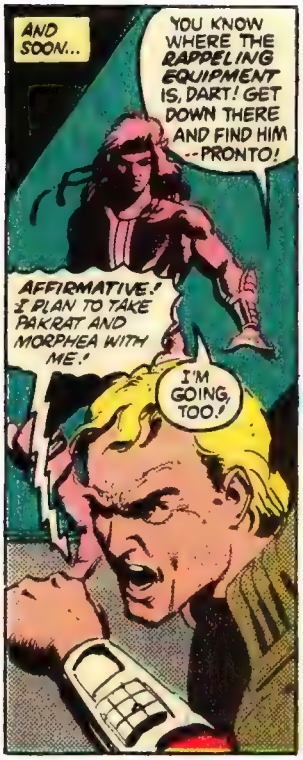

HUKKA BABE HIDE! HUKKA SEEK HUKKA!
NO, YOU DON'T!
HUK OWW! LEGGO HUKKA!
IF I DO, THEN HUKKA FALL DOWN--


--AND GO SPLAT!
eek!

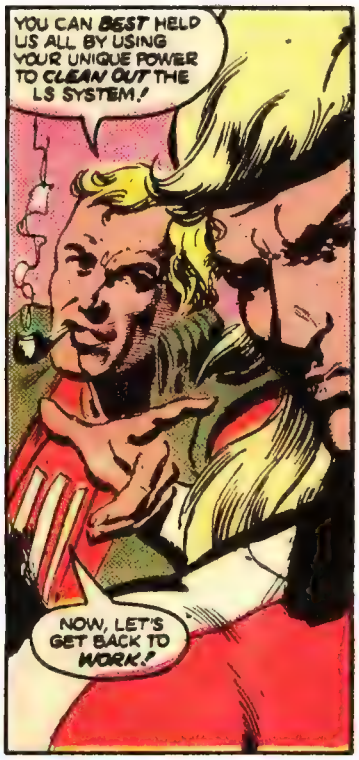

HOLE TOO DEEP HUKKA!
HUKKA FRAID HUKKA!
YOU GOT IT, HUKKA. NOW LET'S GO. WE'VE GOT TO TELL MARTIN AND CHRIS WE'RE GOING TO RESCUE BABE!

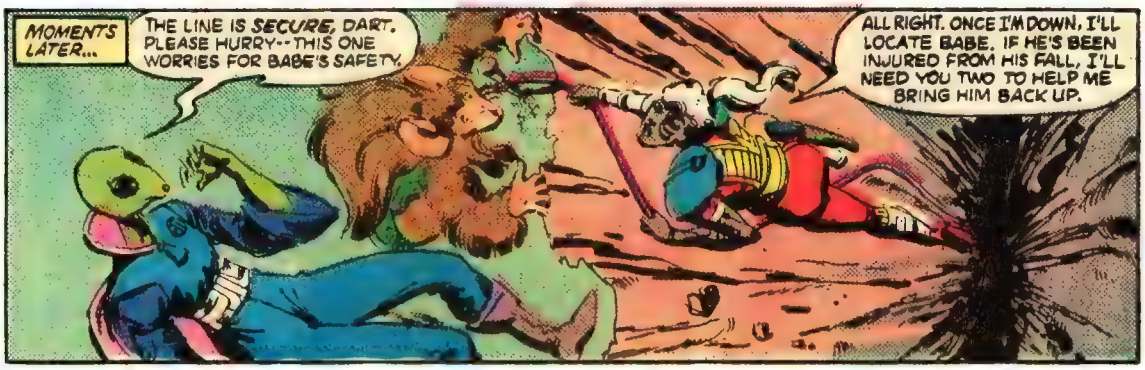

MEANWHILE, IN THE ENGINE ROOM...
ALMOST GOT THEM ALL, DAD.

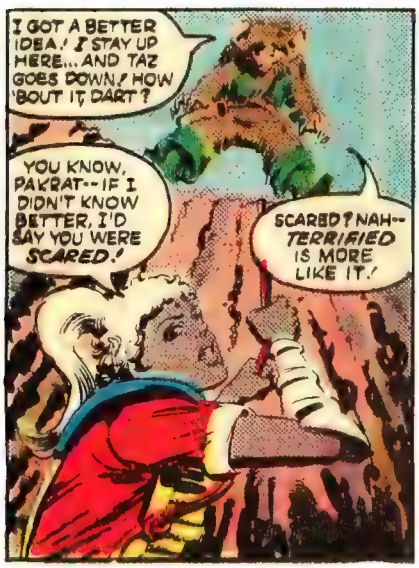
ALMOST ISN'T GOOD ENOUGH, TEMPEST! ALL THOSE PIECES MUST BE REMOVED--OTHERWISE MY REPAIRS WILL BE WORTHLESS!
LOOK! I'M DOING THE BEST I--
SORRY TO INTERRUPT, MARTIN, BUT WE'VE GOT A NEW PROBLEM.


AND SOON...
YOU KNOW WHERE THE RAPPELING EQUIPMENT IS, DART! GET DOWN THERE AND FIND HIM --PRONTO!
AFFIRMATIVE! I PLAN TO TAKE PAKRAT AND MORPHEA WITH ME!
I'M GOING, TOO!

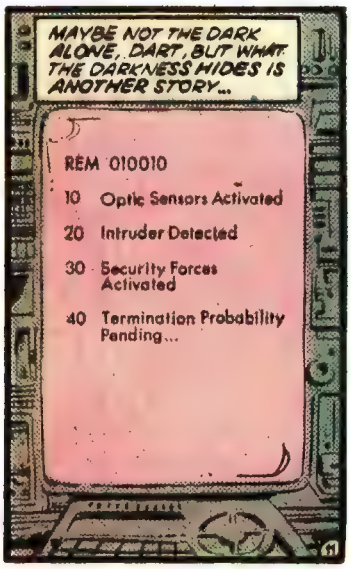
YOU STAY HERE, TEMPEST!
DART'S A TRAINED MERCENARY! AND SHE'S HANDLED BIGGER PROBLEMS THAN THIS ON HER OWN.
BUT DAD-- WITH MY PHASING POWERS I COULD--

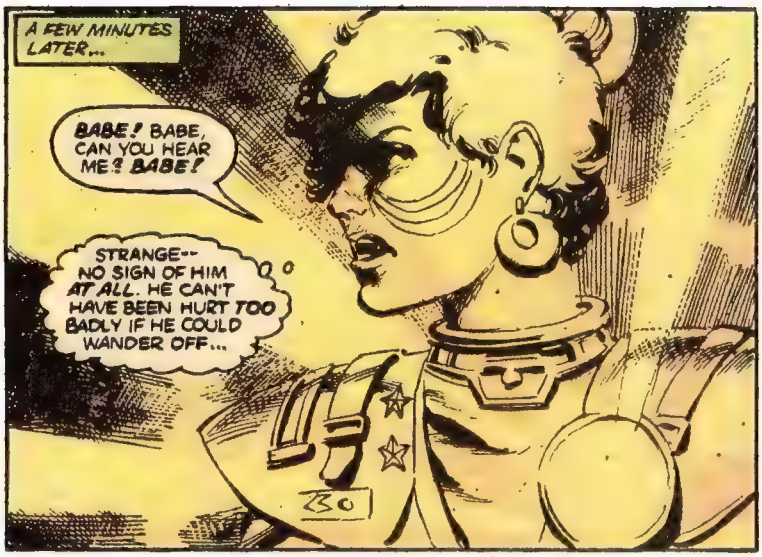

YOU CAN BEST HELP US ALL BY USING YOUR UNIQUE POWER TO CLEAN OUT THE LS SYSTEM!
NOW, LET'S GET BACK TO WORK!


MOMENTS LATER...
THE LINE IS SECURE, DART. PLEASE HURRY--THIS ONE WORRIES FOR BABE'S SAFETY.
ALL RIGHT. ONCE I'M DOWN, I'LL LOCATE BABE. IF HE'S BEEN INJURED FROM HIS FALL, I'LL NEED YOU TWO TO HELP ME BRING HIM BACK UP.

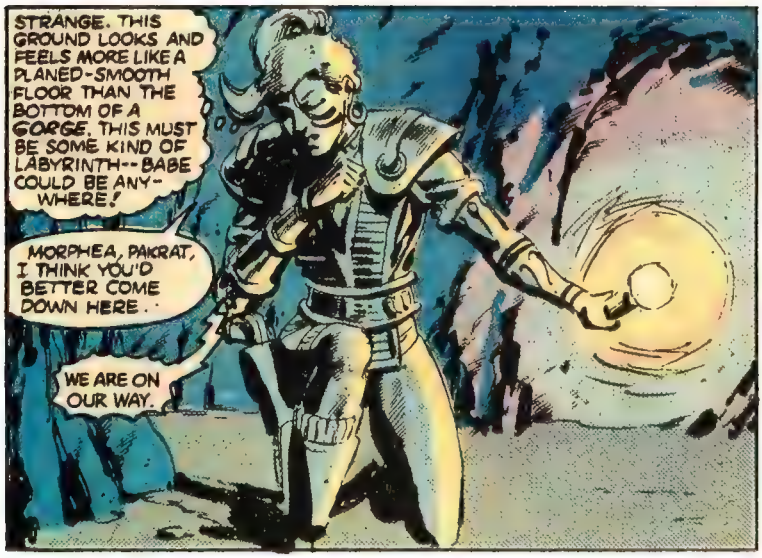

I GOT A BETTER IDEA! I STAY UP HERE... AND TAZ GOES DOWN! HOW 'BOUT IT, DART?
YOU KNOW, PAKRAT--IF I DIDN'T KNOW BETTER, I'D SAY YOU WERE SCARED!
SCARED? NAH-- TERRIFIED IS MORE LIKE IT!

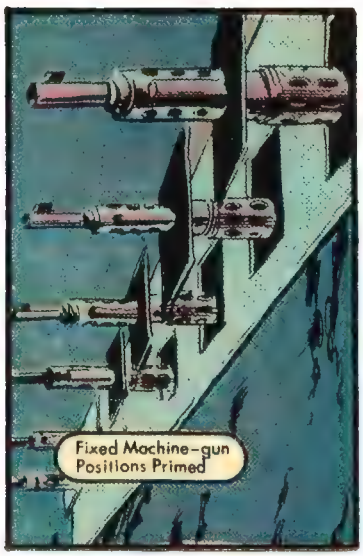
WELL, TAKE IT EASY--WE ALREADY KNOW THERE'S NOTHING LIVING ON THIS PLANET--SO DON'T TELL ME YOU'RE AFRAID OF THE DARK!

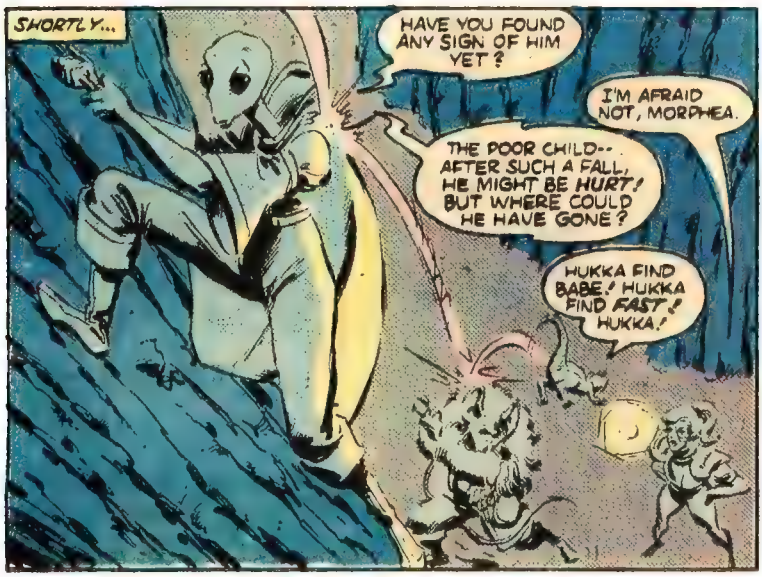

MAYBE NOT THE DARK ALONE, DART, BUT WHAT THE DARKNESS HIDES IS ANOTHER STORY...
REM 010010
10 Optic Sensors Activated
20 Intruder Detected
30 Security Forces Activated
40 Termination Probability Pending...

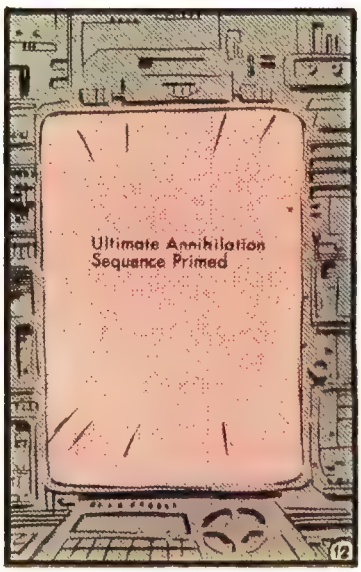

A FEW MINUTES LATER...
BABE! BABE, CAN YOU HEAR ME? BABE!
STRANGE-- NO SIGN OF HIM AT ALL. HE CAN'T HAVE BEEN HURT TOO BADLY IF HE COULD WANDER OFF...

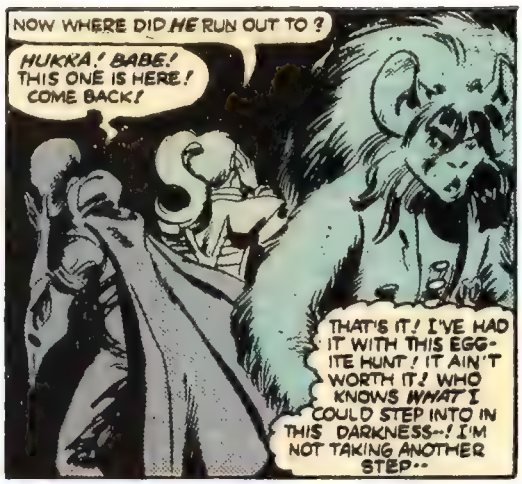
Robot Security Squads Activated


STRANGE. THIS GROUND LOOKS AND FEELS MORE LIKE A PLANED-SMOOTH FLOOR THAN THE BOTTOM OF A GORGE. THIS MUST BE SOME KIND OF LABYRINTH--BABE COULD BE ANY-WHERE!
MORPHEA, PAKRAT, I THINK YOU'D BETTER COME DOWN HERE.
WE ARE ON OUR WAY.


Fixed Machine-gun Positions Primed


SHORTLY...
HAVE YOU FOUND ANY SIGN OF HIM YET?
I'M AFRAID NOT, MORPHEA.
THE POOR CHILD-- AFTER SUCH A FALL, HE MIGHT BE HURT! BUT WHERE COULD HE HAVE GONE?
HUKKA FIND BABE! HUKKA FIND FAST! HUKKA!


Ultimate Annihilation Sequence Primed



"--TILL SOMEONE TURNS ON THE LIGHTS!"

HUKKA FIND LIGHT! HUKKA GOT IT HUKKA!

7

YEEP!

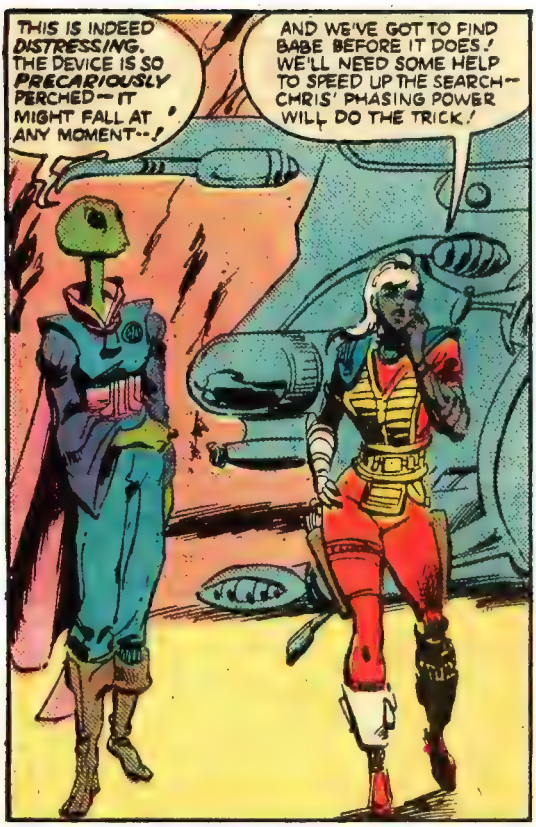
JUMPIN' TIC MONGERS--!

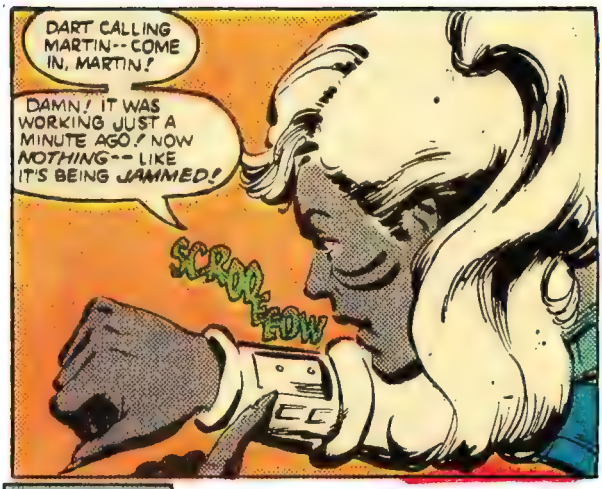
I CAN'T BELIEVE IT--THIS PLACE WAS SO DARK--WE DIDN'T EVEN REALIZE THAT WE'VE WANDERED INTO SOME KIND OF HANGAR!

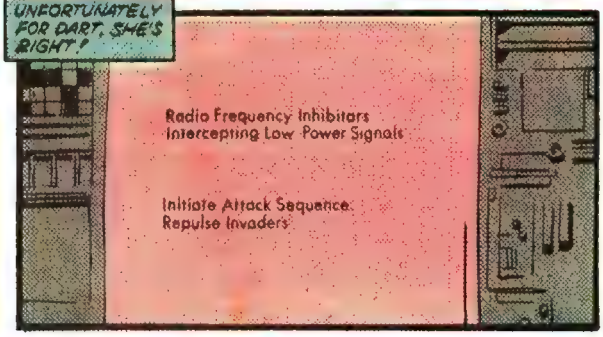
THIS ONE FEARS IT IS MUCH MORE THAN SIMPLY THAT!

UHH, MORPHEA--IN CASE YOU DONT KNOW IT--THAT "DEVICE"--IS A BOMB!

THAT DEVICE SUSPENDED FROM ABOVE--POISED OVER A SEEMINGLY BOTTOMLESS PIT--


THIS IS INDEED DISTRESSING. THE DEVICE IS SO PRECARIOUSLY PERCHED--IT MIGHT FALL AT ANY MOMENT--!
AND WE'VE GOT TO FIND BABE BEFORE IT DOES! WE'LL NEED SOME HELP TO SPEED UP THE SEARCH--CHRIS' PHASING POWER WILL DO THE TRICK!

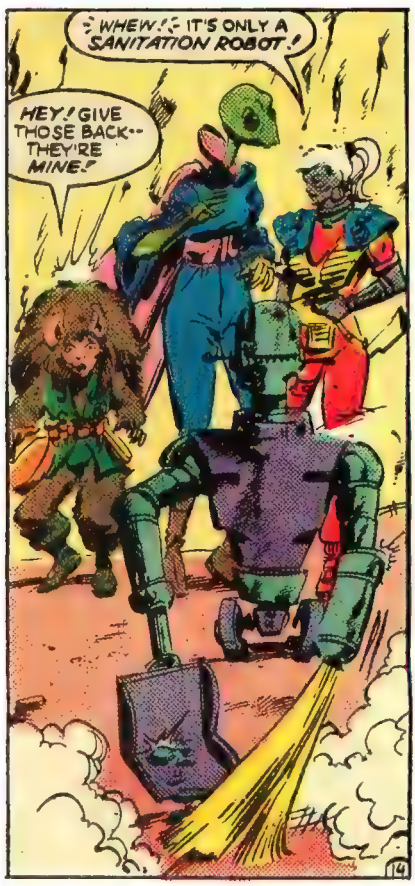

DART CALLING MARTIN--COME IN, MARTIN!
DAMN! IT WAS WORKING JUST A MINUTE AGO! NOW NOTHING--LIKE IT'S BEING JAMMED!
SCROOGEOW

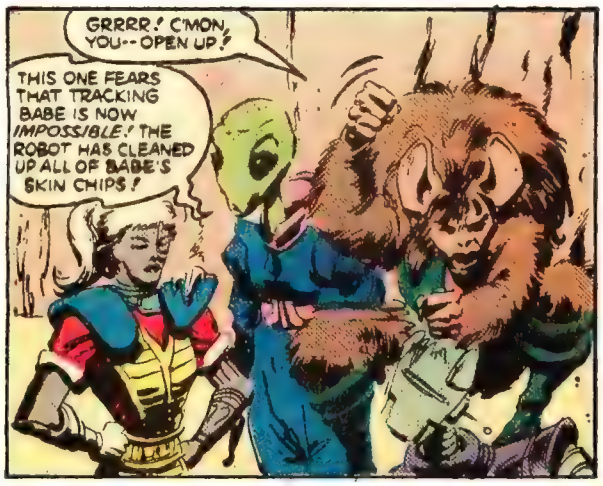

UNFORTUNATELY FOR DART, SHE'S RIGHT!
Radio Frequency Inhibitors
Intercepting Low Power Signals
Initiate Attack Sequence:
Repulse Invaders

C'MON, GROUP--IT LOOKS LIKE WE'RE ON OUR OWN NOW!

HOLD IT! THE TRAIL OF BABE'S SKIN IS STARTING AGAIN--BUT--
SURRA SURRA SURRA SURRA
QUICK! AGAINST THE WALL! SOMETHING'S THERE!

HANG TIGHT! HERE IT COMES--!

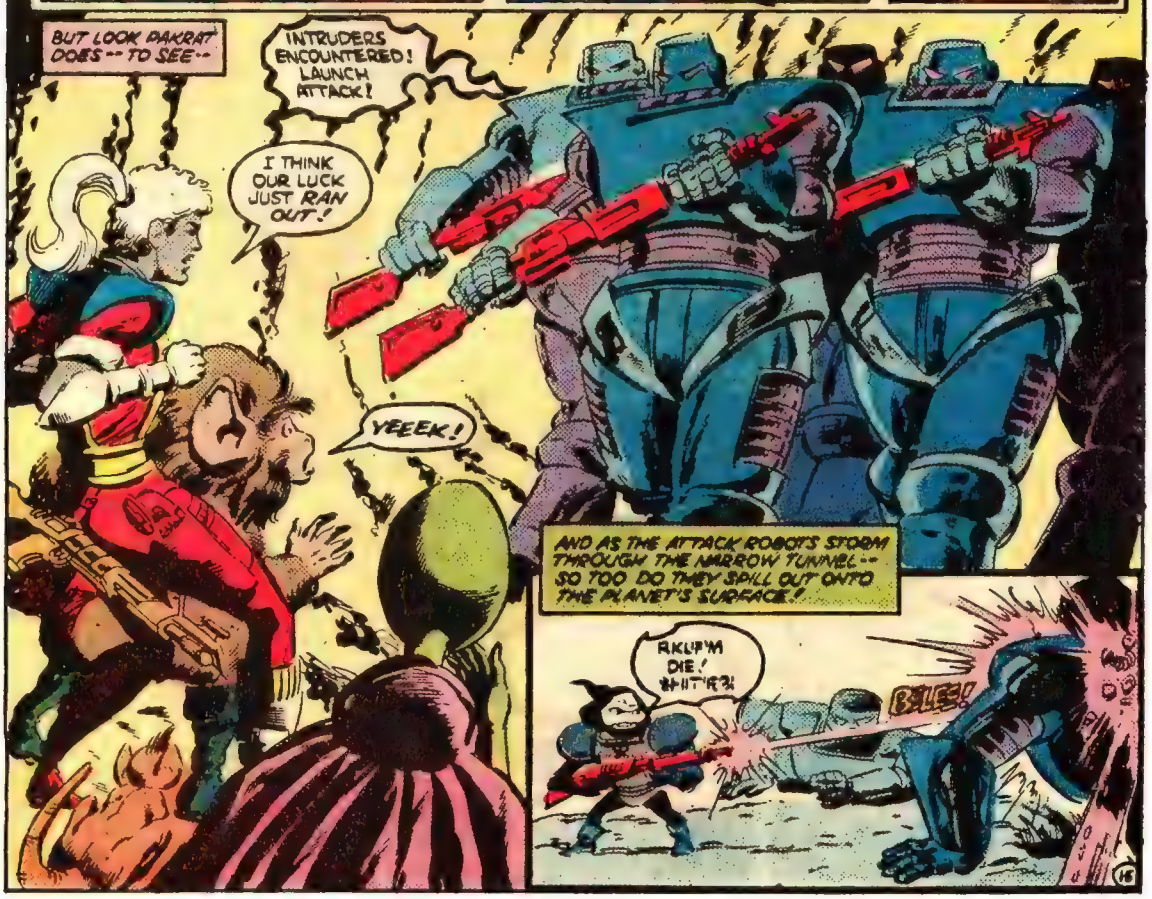

WHEW!--IT'S ONLY A SANITATION ROBOT!
HEY! GIVE THOSE BACK--THEY'RE MINE!

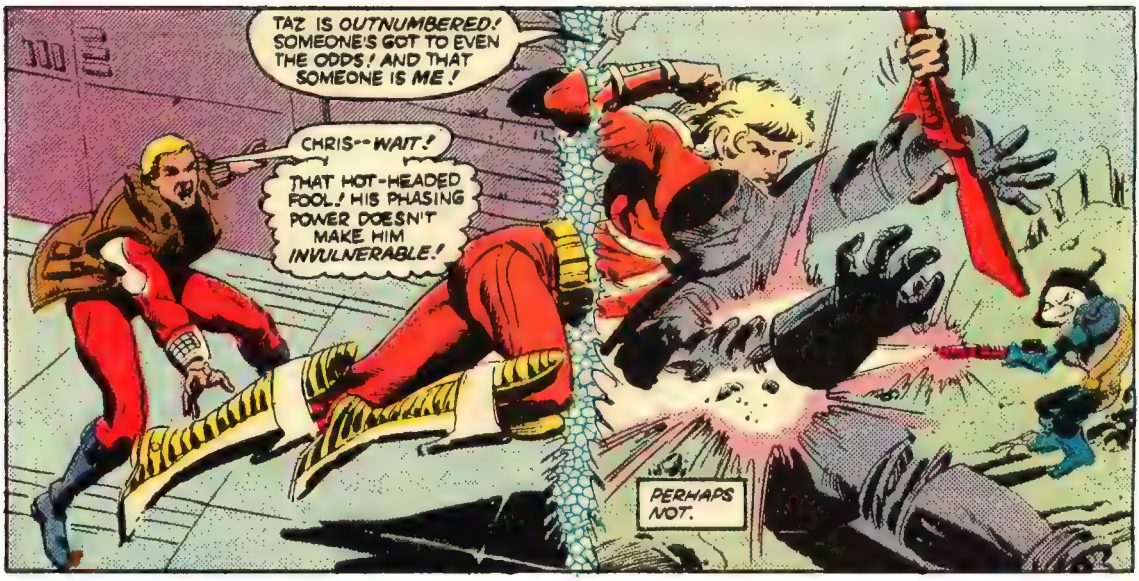

GRRRR! C'MON, YOU--OPEN UP!
THIS ONE FEARS THAT TRACKING BABE IS NOW *IMPOSSIBLE!* THE ROBOT HAS CLEANED UP ALL OF BABE'S SKIN CHIPS!

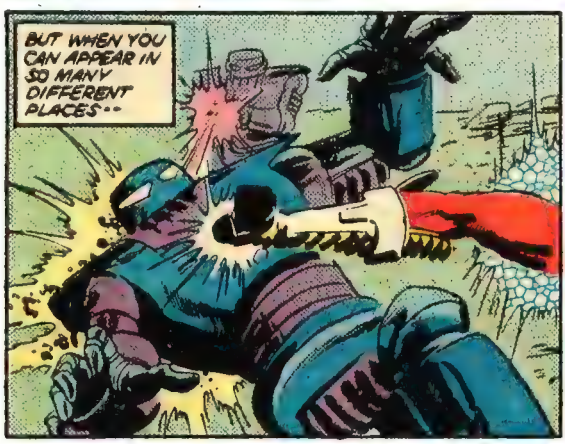
THAT JUST MEANS WE HAVE TO *SNIFF* BABE OUT--WITH PAKRAT'S NOSE!
WHAT? YOU WANT ME TO FOLLOW BABE'S *SCENT*--LIKE A COMMON TYREAN BLOODHOUND?

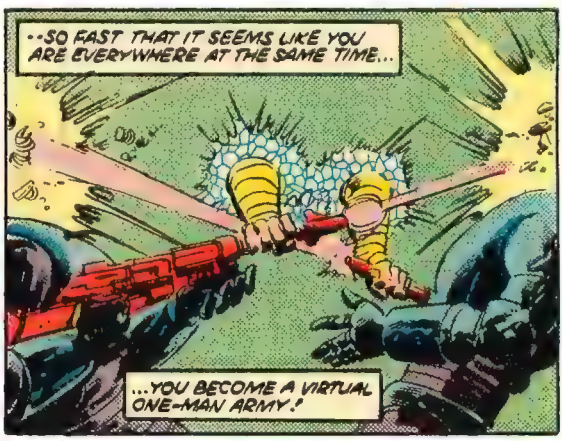
WHY, EVEN *YOUR* UNDERDEVELOPED NOSTRILS MUST BE ABLE TO TELL HE WENT *THAT* WAY!

UH--SOMETHING TELLS ME I *DON'T* WANT TO LOOK *THAT* WAY! *SURK!*


BUT LOOK PAKRAT DOES--TO SEE--
INTRUDERS ENCOUNTERED! LAUNCH ATTACK!
I THINK OUR LUCK JUST *RAN OUT!*
YEEEK!
AND AS THE ATTACK ROBOTS STORM THROUGH THE NARROW TUNNEL--SO TOO DO THEY SPILL OUT ONTO THE PLANET'S SURFACE!
RKLI'M DIE! ##IT'R?!
BALES!

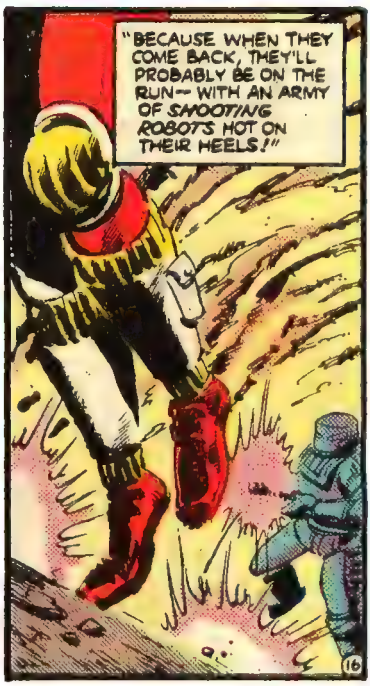

TAZ IS OUTNUMBERED! SOMEONE'S GOT TO EVEN THE ODDS! AND THAT SOMEONE IS ME!
CHRIS--WAIT!
THAT HOT-HEADED FOOL! HIS PHASING POWER DOESN'T MAKE HIM INVULNERABLE!
PERHAPS NOT.

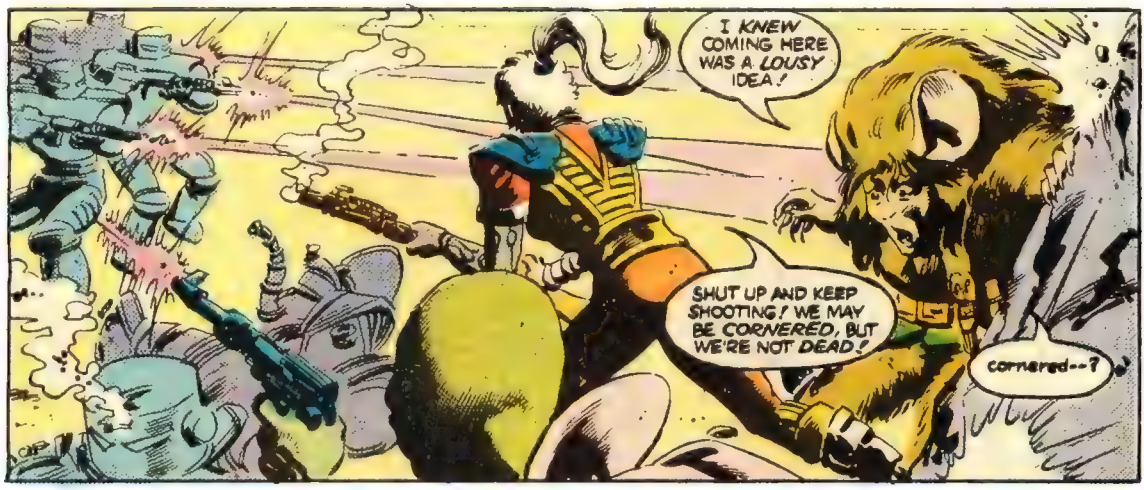

BUT WHEN YOU CAN APPEAR IN SO MANY DIFFERENT PLACES--


--SO FAST THAT IT SEEMS LIKE YOU ARE EVERYWHERE AT THE SAME TIME...
...YOU BECOME A VIRTUAL ONE-MAN ARMY!

AND WHILE THAT MIGHT NOT BE INVULNERABILITY--IT IS THE NEXT BEST THING!
SO MUCH FOR THEM, RIGHT, TAZ?
NOW I'D BETTER CHECK AND SEE HOW DART'S DOING!

HOW MANY TIMES DO I HAVE TO TELL YOU, TEMPEST? NO!
BUT, DAD! DART AND THE OTHERS COULD BE IN TROUBLE!
ALL THE MORE REASON FOR US TO GET SCANNER ONE FIXED!

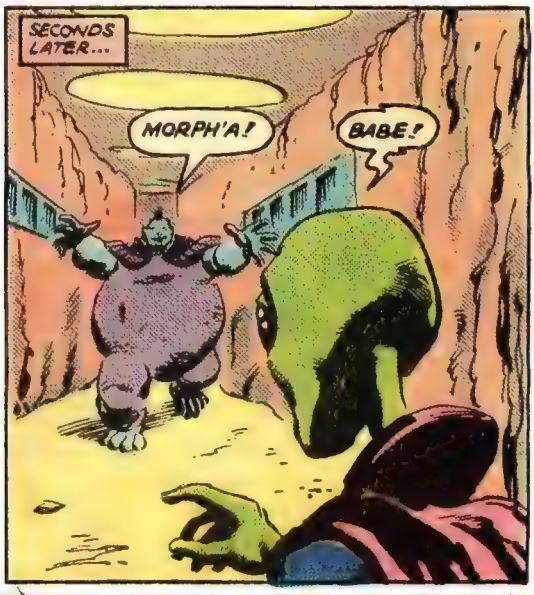

"BECAUSE WHEN THEY COME BACK, THEY'LL PROBABLY BE ON THE RUN-- WITH AN ARMY OF SHOOTING ROBOTS HOT ON THEIR HEELS!"

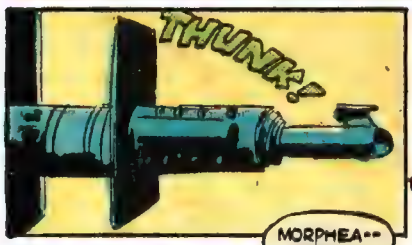


THIS ONE'S MINDSTINGS WOULD HAVE NO EFFECT AGAINST ROBOTS--SO AS MUCH AS THIS ONE DETESTS THE USE OF WEAPONRY--THERE IS NO CHOICE!

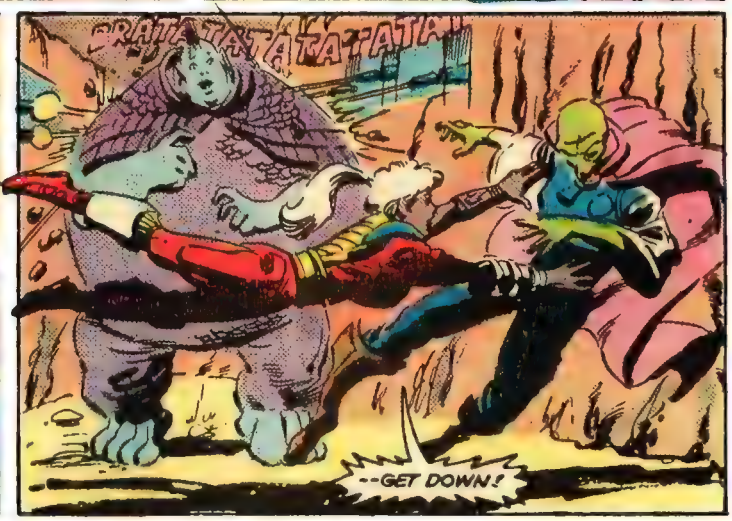
C'MON, MORPHEA! WE'VE ALMOST GOT 'EM ALL--ANOTHER FEW BLASTS--AND THIS BATTLE WILL BE HISTORY!

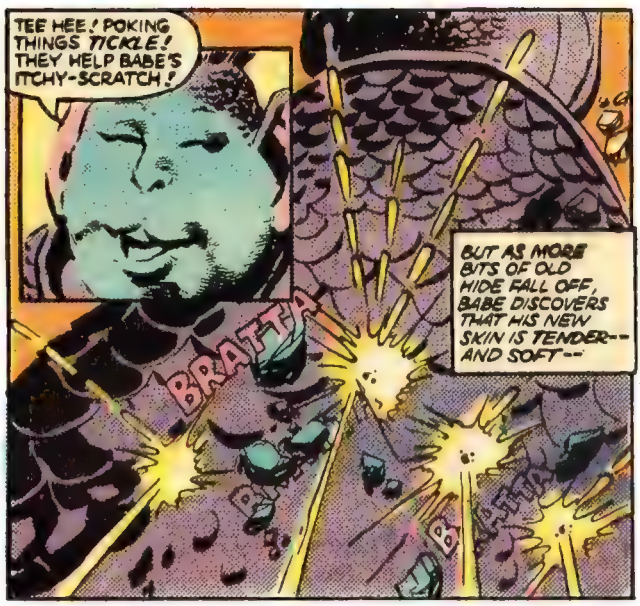
MEANWHILE, NOT FAR AWAY...
SKRUTCH
SCRATCH
HUNH? FIGHTING SOUNDS? SOMEONE IN TROUBLE!
MAYBE MORPHA! BABE BETTER SEE!


SECONDS LATER...
MORPH'A!
BABE!


THUNK!

MORPHEA-- BABE--


BRATATATATATATATA
--GET DOWN!


TEE HEE! POKING THINGS TICKLE! THEY HELP BABE'S ITCHY-SCRATCH!
BUT AS MORE BITS OF OLD HIDE FALL OFF, BABE DISCOVERS THAT HIS NEW SKIN IS TENDER-- AND SOFT--
BRATTA
BRATTA

WONK!
WONK!
OUCH! POKING THINGS HURT NOW! BABE MAKE POKING THINGS STOP!

SUDDENLY...

SSSRRRIT-K

TOK TOK TOK

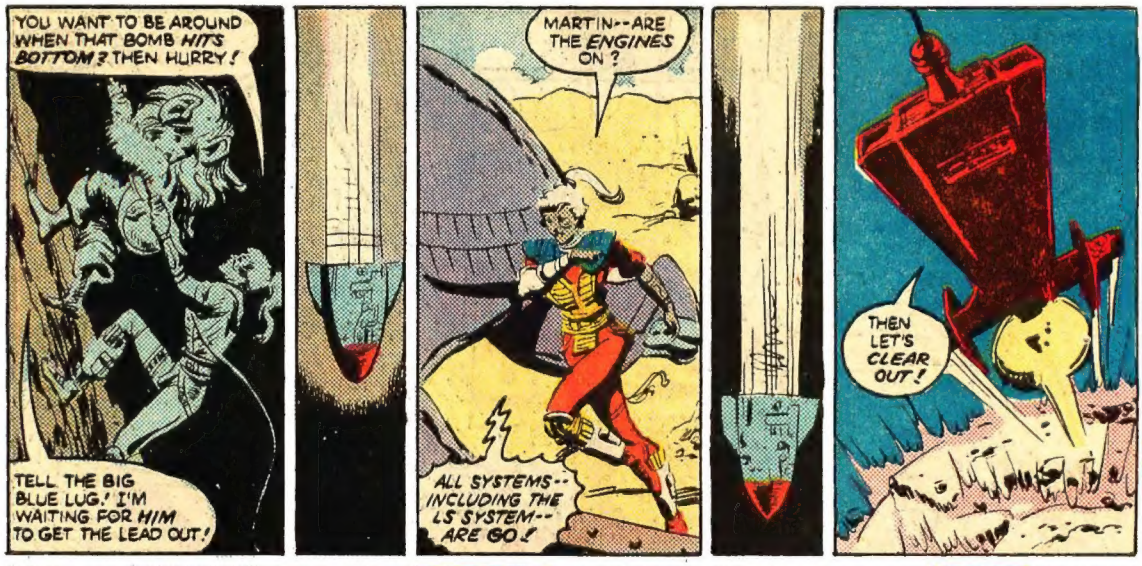
OOO! BALL TOY FOR BABE! THANK YOU, WALL!

MY VISION!

BABE! LET IT GO! IT'S A--

--BOMB!

YAWHOOM


YOU WANT TO BE AROUND WHEN THAT BOMB HITS BOTTOM? THEN HURRY!
TELL THE BIG BLUE LUG! I'M WAITING FOR HIM TO GET THE LEAD OUT!
MARTIN--ARE THE ENGINES ON?
ALL SYSTEMS--INCLUDING THE LS SYSTEM--ARE GO!
THEN LET'S CLEAR OUT!

AND SOON...
ALL THOSE PRETTY, PRICELESS STONES...GONE!
THAT HOLE UNDER THE BOMB MUST HAVE LED TO THE PLANET'S CORE. WHEN THE BOMB FINALLY LANDED, IT MUST HAVE STARTED A CHAIN-REACTION--BLOWING UP THE WHOLE PLANET!

THE PLANET'S INHABITANTS MUST HAVE KILLED EACH OTHER OFF BEFORE THE DESTRUCT COMMAND COULD BE GIVEN. WHEN WE TRESPASSED, THE FINAL COUNTDOWN BEGAN!
AN ENTIRE PLANET OBLITERATED--ALL BY THE WEAPONS OF WAR! IT'S TERRIBLE!
NAH--EVERYTHING'S WORKED OUT FINE!

I'VE STILL GOT THE SKIN-GEMS IN MY POU--
--AWW, NO!
TOUGH BREAK, PAKRAT.
MAYBE NEXT TIME YOU CAN PAWN THE SKIN-GEMS OFF ON SOMEONE ELSE--BEFORE THEY TURN TO DUST!
THE END!

DAILY PLANET™

Late City Edition

★ Monday, December 1, 1985 ★

New Series Special

SECRET ORIGINS REVEALED!

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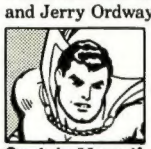
First Issue exposes Golden Age Superman*!

Next month Len Wein and Gil Kane bring you all the facts about The Blue Beetle—soon to star in his own series!

METROPOLIS, U.S.A. —— *Daily Planet* reporter Clark Kent has discovered shocking revelations concerning the origins of some of DC's most treasured characters and heroes. Kent disclosed the results of his year-long investigation to DC's Publisher and President, Jenette Kahn, in a meeting late yesterday. This morning a press conference was called by Executive Vice-President, Paul Levitz. Levitz admitted to a crowd of reporters that Kent's sleuthing was both significant and revealing. He then announced the publication of a new series by saying: "*Secret Origins* is exactly that—a revelation of the beginnings of DC greats! For the premiere of this unprecedented, ongoing series, writer/editor Roy Thomas (*Infinity, Inc., All-Star Squadron*) will team up with renowned artists Wayne Boring and Jerry Ordway. The first issue will feature, appropriately enough, the original Superman. The format of *Secret Origins* will be of special interest, as the odd-numbered issues will retell the origins of DC's Golden Age heroes in chronological order (for example, #3—Captain Marvel, #5—Crimson Avenger), and the even-numbered issues will retell the secrets behind the modern heroes. Also, comic fans will be excited to hear that each issue will be created by a different artistic team."

Blue Beetle* (#2)



Captain Marvel* (#3)

Firestorm* (#4)

CAN A DEAD MAN DIE AGAIN?
The end of a story that never really ended.
DEADMAN.
A four issue mini-series.
DC
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